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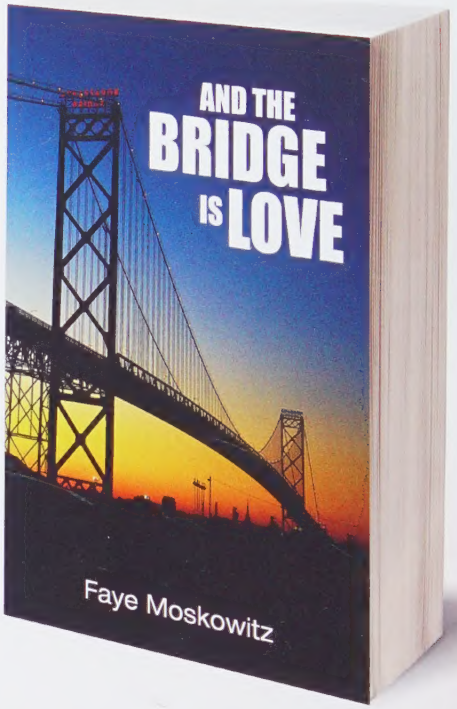

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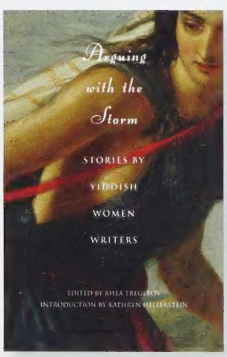

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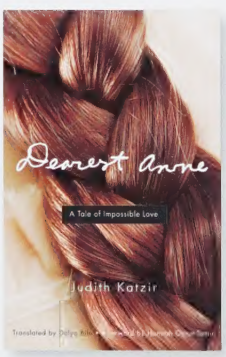

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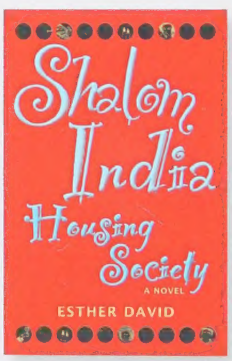

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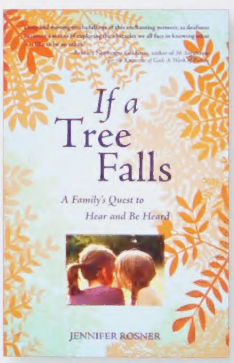

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Lilith

vol. 36, no.3 • fall 2011

*In the Garden of Eden, long before the eating of the apple, the Holy One created the first human beings— a man, Adam, and a woman, Lilith. Lilith said, "We are equal; we come from the same earth."**

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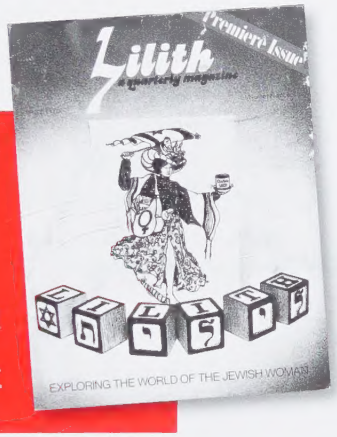

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COVER: YVE LUDWIG

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"Money is the bio-fuel that sustains transformative change."

—Nessa Rapoport

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Lilith

independent, Jewish & frankly feminist

Lilith

Editor in Chief
Susan Weidman Schneider
susanws@lilith.org

Managing Editor
Naomi Danis *naomi@lilith.org*

Senior Editor
Susan Schnur *susanschnur@lilith.org*

Assistant Editor
Sonia Isard *sonia@lilith.org*

Fiction Editor
Yona Zeldis McDonough

Poetry Editor
Marge Piercy

Book Reviews
Ilana Kurshan *ilana@lilith.org*

Advertising
Ellen Jacobs

Art Director
Lindsay Barnett *lindsay@lilith.org*

Photographer
Joan Roth

Interns
Jillian Finkelstein, Elissa Goldstein, Hanna Sender

Board of Directors
Frances Brandt, Eve Coulson, Barbara B. Dobkin, Deborah Fuller, Heidi Gralla, Yvette Gralla, Michal Hart Hillman, Natalie Pelavin, Susan Weidman Schneider, Mildred Weissman, Rose Zoltek-Jick

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Lilith
250 West 57th Street, #2432
New York, NY 10107
phone: 212-757-0818 fax: 212-757-5705
info@Lilith.org www.Lilith.org

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We're jubilant! We're 35!

Lilith magazine has witnessed change, reported on change, and spurred the change itself. The arc travels from the ordination of the first women rabbis to the challenges faced by transgender Jews, from Jewish women's organizations demurring from supporting abortion rights to mobilizing and marching, a decade or two later, for that same right to choose.

Our writers have often been first on the scene. The role of women in Israel's army. The reasons women get anxious when others identify them as philanthropists. How to talk about good rabbis who are, not so incidentally, sexually inappropriate. Women's ambivalent roles as Jewish families change. Looking back over the major stories Lilith has reported on with vigor—and tenderness—over the past 35 years, we cheer that many of these stories broke new ground. And we celebrate with you the vastly diverse experiences these thousands of articles reflect.

Lilith's 35 year of truth telling, in print and in pixels.

Some of them are about social change and social justice: A cover story revealing the complex ties that bind Jewish girls and their African-American nannies. Why women leaders (too few of them, true) need to lobby for workplace fairness in Jewish organizations. And, in a report on treating household help equitably, how we enact workplace fairness when the workplace is our own homes.

Truth-telling about our bodies: Lilith's sold-out "Jewish Hair" issue. What it means to hear "You don't look Jewish" when you're a Jew of color. The complex reasons why Jewish women have more breast cancer. Food and the double-bind of "Eat, Eat! Diet, Diet!"

Family relationships: Daughters on their mothers; sisters on their brothers; accord and discord; coping with family secrets around mental illness, incest, abuse; new rituals for separation, and for divorce.

Community and culture: The ways women are energizing Jewish politics and Jewish practice, and reshaping art, film, music, fiction.

A whole new take on Jewish celebrations: Before Lilith exposed the remarkable origins of the hamantasch, who knew that, secretly, they're fertility pastries? And before Lilith reported on what Jewish women view as holy, who knew to craft a tallit using our foremothers' photographs?

Since Lilith's launch in 1976, I've seen that our articles themselves are only the beginning of a great conversation which continues in living rooms and academic courses, in youth groups and summer camps, on campus, in congregations, at JCCs and in more than 90 face-to-face salons in people's homes, where women across the age spectrum meet to talk about the ideas in each new issue of Lilith. You're likely already part of these conversations, one way or another, even if this is the first time you're reading the magazine.

Another kind of Lilith conversation takes place on the phone, in email messages, in snail mail and, recently, in the responses to an online survey where, in honor of Lilith's 35th birthday, we asked an extra-credit question: What do you want to read next in the magazine?

"I'd like to see (and be part of) personal narratives or fictionalized first-person stories really describing abortions in "the bad old days." I think the kids today have no idea what they could be facing if those days return."

"Few women are saving enough for retirement & younger women are not thinking about it at all. Lilith is not an economic mag, but this is particularly a women's issue because we earn less, outlive our spouses, and often get the short stick in a divorce."

"What happens when your synagogue no longer meets your needs? Do you make it change? Or do you leave?"

"More on addiction—including sex addiction—in Jewish men."

Lilith's mission is communal and personal, hortatory and analytical, political and consensus-building. National, global and very personal.

Lilith, 35 and counting, will celebrate what we've done and what's yet to come by launching a new website early in 2012, bringing you digital subscriptions and access to 35-plus years of archival Lilith stories along with opinionated commentators on the Lilith blog who help create a community for Jewish women everywhere.

Two kinds of generosity make these conversations possible. Lilith is a not-for-profit organization, its work supported largely by generous women and men like those whose names you see on the facing page. Tax-deductible contributions from readers like you have, to reference the *shehechiyanu* prayer, brought Lilith to life, sustained it, and enabled it, and us, to reach this milestone. Another kind of generosity flows from the intellectual capital of the staff, writers and artists, lively interns and devoted board members, contributing editors and informal advice-givers who are all part of Lilith's community of readers and thinkers. This community includes you.

We thank you all, and look forward to continuing the conversation—in print and in pixels—as we head for our 36th (double *chai*) birthday, and beyond.

Please celebrate with us. Keep on reading.

Susan

Susan Weidman Schneider
Editor in Chief

PHOTO: RACHEL M. SCHNEIDER

Traditionally the voice of a Jewish woman was not to be heard in public, lest it arouse men. These pages are for news about Jewish women in our own strong voices.

Esther M. Broner (center, in white), feminist icon, novelist, creative liturgist, convener of early feminist seders, died in June 2011. She often said that all human beings, especially women, need *kavod*, honor. **Letty Cottin Pogrebin** eulogized her at her funeral:

Borrowing from Jewish tradition but bearing her unique creative stamp, she invented ceremonies that made the ordinary sublime. When writer **Marilyn French** was suffering a grave physical illness, Esther convened what she called "the coven," a small circle of friends who supported Marilyn through her ordeal. They surrounded her with love, advice, energy and a Broner-esque ritual that—in this case, I'm told—included a good dinner, much hilarity, whispered wishes and a secret ceremony involving sparkly toy wands. When Esther was ill, the coven came through for her—as did about 30 of her other friends who visited, bringing food, books, gossip, and conversation; monitoring her meds; maintaining her files; taking care of her paperwork; and lifting her spirits. You see, we all learned from Esther.

Doris B. Gold, a poet and publisher, died in July 2011. Among her many accomplishments was that she reissued out-of-print books of special interest to Jewish women, including **Nessa Rapoport**'s novel *Preparing for Sabbath*. **Aviva Cantor**, one of Lilith's founding editors, spoke at Gold's funeral:

"She was a supreme organizer. She inspired and motivated; she had a fine sense of priorities and planning. Those of us for whom she was a mentor often said she could easily run a small government.

"Doris was a pioneer. She filled needs that had been unrecognized before she took notice. One of her major projects was to establish Biblio Press, a small publishing company. Its first publication was another of her path-breaking ideas: a bibliography of writings on Jewish women from 1900 to the 1980s, which, with its updated editions, continues to be used in many college courses and women's groups. She went on to publish scores of paperback books including a biography of **Ernestine Rose** and the memoirs of **Manya Shochat**."

For the full text of this eulogy, please visit JWA.org.

JOAN ROTH

PHOTO FROM WIKIMEDIA.ORG

PHOTO COURTESY OF DEBORAH COPAKEN KOGAN

Lara Logan; Deborah Copaken Kogan with her family

I read the finger-wagging reactions in the press to the assault on **Lara Logan** in Tahrir Square. That she was attacked twice—first in Egypt, then in the press—was sickening but not surprising. For just as sexual assault is an abuse of power, so too is our apparently favorite national pastime: judging women… After the attack on Logan, **Bill O'Reilly** posed the following question: "Is the danger to women journalists in the Muslim world worth the risk?"

Dear Bill, I wanted to remind him. It has nothing to do with Muslims. Or journalism. To state the obvious: Because most men are physically stronger than most women, females will always be at a greater risk of rape, assault and battery.....

Continuing to cover wars after becoming a parent is a deeply personal decision for all journalists, but only the women who do so are either condemned or forced to account for their choices.

Deborah Copaken Kogan in "America's Real Favorite Pastime? Judging Women," *www.more.com*.

Jane Gross, speaking about her new book, *A Bittersweet Season: Caring for Our Aging Parents*, with **Sandee Brawarsky**:

"We're all going to end up in the equivalent of all-girl communes. In a way, that's what nursing homes are."

Her fantasy is a great big house with a porch lined with rocking chairs. All the residents would have long-term insurance policies, and would help take care of each other. "We'd all sit on the porch and talk about what it was like to be young."

The New York Jewish Week, July 26, 2011.

When I Was an Intern at Lilith...

"I think I didn't know how weird it was when I was 19. When it's your first real internship, you don't know anything, so I had no idea that being treated with dignity and respect was so rare and wonderful." **Susannah Goldstein**, Lilith intern in 1999, paused to chuckle, and I joined in. She is the fourth woman in one morning to have shared some iteration of this sentiment. I've been speaking to the illustrious alumnae of Lilith's internship program—in effect essentially since the launch of the magazine in 1976—as a means of connecting with this incredible pool of women as Lilith's 35th year becomes its portentous 36th, and learning more about what makes this program so unique. These conversations feel especially poignant to me as I, too, am an alum of the Lilith internship.

These woman are scattered across the globe these days, from California to Israel and beyond, studying for their doctorates or teaching graduate students, serving as nutrition coaches and funding social entrepreneurs, birthing children and novels and documentary films. Ask them to consider their time at Lilith, though, and some very clear patterns start emerging. What made their time at Lilith so valuable to them—valuable enough that they were happy to take time out of their busy lives to reminisce on the phone with a total stranger—was, usually, not the hard professional skills that many internships tout. Rather, the respect they received, the honest interest in their ideas and value placed on their thoughts, inspired and empowered them. In short, this is what a feminist workplace looks like.

Former Lilith interns Susannah Jaffe (posing with an American Girl doll), Rachel Kadish and Lisa Lepson.

"I remember **Susan Weidman Schneider** helping me out... She was a mentoring presence in all aspects—and it felt like a place where feminist values really held sway," **Beryl Satter**, intern in 1980, recalled. **Rachel Kadish**'s recollections were quite specific: "Someone needs to speak to the arts director? You're the arts director. The toner needs to be changed? You change the toner. It wasn't just good training for the work at Lilith—it was good training for life, too, understanding that you could play multiple roles. What I remember about the work at Lilith is that it was very democratic and improvised. You never knew what a day would hold."

It was not only the way responsibility and opportunity were shared—the feminist workplace involved real feminist role models, too, as **Elizabeth Michaelson**, intern in 1993–1994, recalls: "There was a major birthday and **Susan Schnur** gave Susan Schneider a gift showing the maiden/mother/crone stages and told Susan, 'You're a crone now.' I was sort of shocked—you can't say that to people! But Susan Weidman Schneider seemed to take real pleasure in it, and it was really wonderful for me to see someone take pleasure in the process of aging, of gaining wisdom."

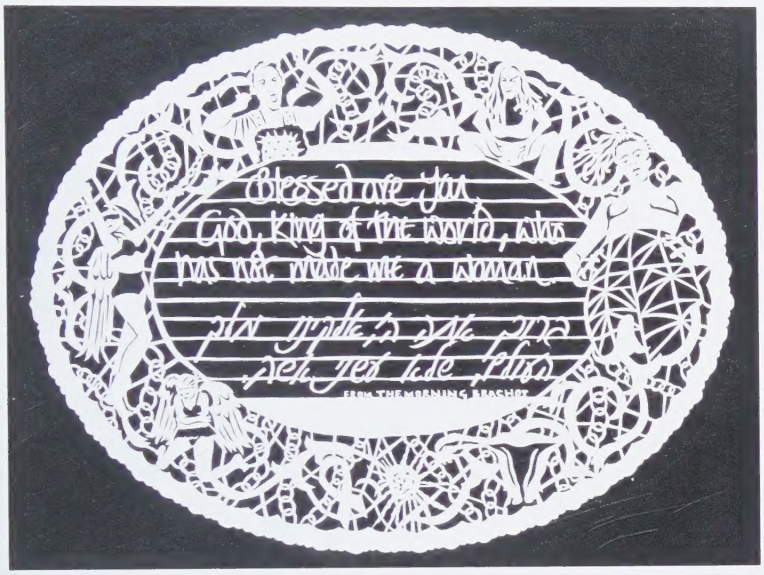
At a time when the United States is plagued by unemployment and uncertainty, it is certainly refreshing to meditate on the powerful aftershocks of telling young women that they are competent, they are capable, and they are being listened to.

MELANIE WEISS

Calling all Lilith internship alums! Did we miss you in our outreach? There's still plenty of time and plenty of opportunities to connect—send an email to info@lilith.org for more information.

Transgressive Doilies—Look Closely!

The artist, U.K.-based **Jacqueline Nicholls**, says, "The Ladies Guild Collection is a series of paper-cuts that combine rabbinic misogyny with sexualized images of women, all on a nice paper doily. The texts in this series are selected specifically because they voice the misogynist attitudes that influence how women were, and continue to be, seen and treated in the community." *www.jacquelinenicholls.com*



A woman prefers her
husband to be a donkey driver, at home
every chance to satisfy her sexually, even
though he only earns 1 kav of wheat, rather
than a distant camel driver who has sex
once in 30 days, even though he earns
9 kabin.
KETUBOT 65A

A Controversy over Girls

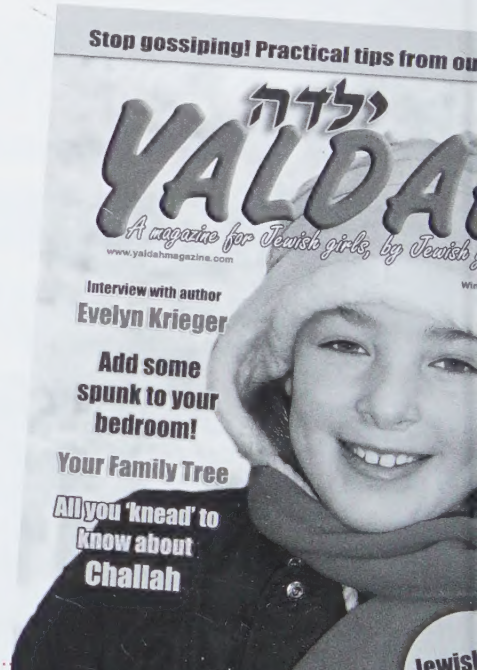
When a magazine is written for young girls, by young girls, with the intention of "empowering girls," is it a feminist magazine? That question was at the heart of a debate earlier this summer between **Leah Caras**, founder of Yaldah magazine ("Girl," in Hebrew), and readers of Tablet, an "online magazine of Jewish news, ideas and culture."

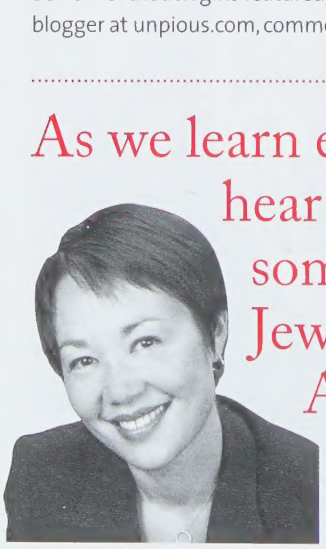
The dispute began on August 17, when Tablet published a profile of Yaldah ('Young and Modest') by **Irin Carmon**. Carmon, who writes regularly for Jezebel.com and has a prolific online presence, offered a cautiously complimentary appraisal. She acknowledged Caras' remarkable achievement in single-handedly stewarding a mini-media empire (which she founded at the age of 13), but also highlighted the inherent contradiction in the magazine's mission: that of education and empowerment versus the preservation of modesty and "innocence." Yaldah sidesteps all controversial issues: boys, sex, drugs, loss of faith—anything which might challenge Jewish Orthodox norms of modesty and mitzvot. "Sometimes," Carmon observed, "parents and children seem so united in the pages of the magazine that it's hard to tell the difference between them."

Caras' response to the coverage was initially positive; she thanked Tablet graciously and effusively in the comments section online, and reiterated that Yaldah was not just for Orthodox readers but for all Jewish girls (though there do not seem to be non-Orthodox girls featured). FreiFem, a blogger at unpious.com, commented next: "This magazine's emphasis on modesty and its refusal to address any real issues of teenage life, is irresponsible and sickening." A wave of Yaldah supporters rushed forth in enthusiastic defense of the magazine, and debate ensued. Was Yaldah a feminist publication? Why not? Should it even matter? Does Yaldah have a responsibility to educate its readers about the "controversial" stuff of adolescence and adulthood, when the media is already saturated with such content?

Though Caras doesn't describe herself or her magazine as feminist, she's attempting to reconcile Torah observance with an ethos of female independence and empowerment. That's a very precarious and challenging path to walk, as many Orthodox women can attest. Caras is passionate about the ability of Jewish girls to change the world and achieve their dreams, but what if your dream is to be a hedge fund manager, or a neurosurgeon, or a navy pilot? How do you achieve those things without, say, wearing pants, or working on Shabbat, or shaking a male colleague's hand? These are all behaviors a "modest" Orthodox girl or woman would likely eschew. Carmon is right to apply a critical lens to Caras' endeavor—not because the magazine has a moral obligation to explicitly address "controversial" issues such as sex (Yaldah's readership is as young as eight), but because Yaldah *doesn't* engage with the challenges and difficulties of being an empowered, Orthodox female *adult*. The magazine talks the talk of empowerment, but does it walk the walk? There's the rub: if your mission is to empower young Jewish girls, you need to educate them about how to apply these ideals in the real, secular, often-sexist, sexualized world. Then, hopefully, we'll see some female, Orthodox, head-covering neurosurgeons. I, for one, would stand up and applaud.

ELISSA GOLDSTEIN





As we learn each other's stories we hear the challenges and joys of reconciling our sometimes competing identities of being Jewish while also feminist, Arab, gay, African-American, or Korean. We were a mixed multitude in ancient times, and we still are.

Rabbi/Cantor Angela Warnick Buchdahl of Manhattan's Central Synagogue, speaking at the Auburn Theological Seminary annual breakfast.

Hadar Galron, the first Orthodox female stand-up comedienne in Israel, has a new show in which she portrays biblical characters like **Rahav** the prostitute, and **Queen Esther**. "I spent a whole year doing in-depth research on the subject, and the more I learned, the more annoyed I got. I discovered enormous discrimination. Inside me were many feelings of anger and frustration, and I didn't know what to do about it. Then I read a sentence in a book by one of the great writing teachers, which said that if you are not angry enough, you shouldn't write comedy. That's when I said to myself, that's it, the status of women in Judaism is awesome comedy."

Galron interviewed by **Assaffa Peled Elimelech**, Yediot, June 24, 2011.

Moving Traditions—Moving Forward

In a world where one in five teens has reported abusing prescription medications, where physical aggression occurs in one third of teen dating relationships, and 81% of 10 year old girls are afraid of being fat, it's clear that teen girls are dealing with a ton of challenges every day. Jewish girls now have some guidance for developing into Jewish women.

"Rosh Hodesh—It's a Girl Thing" is the flagship program of the organization Moving Traditions, directed by **Deborah Meyer**. It is designed to build intimate and empowering communities of Jewish girls in small groups across the country, and address gender issues in Jewish life. The girls meet every month with a trained facilitator to talk about their lives, their experiences, their gender, their friends—all within a rich Jewish framework of innovation and tradition. At Purim, for example, the girls might do the "It Isn't Romantic" activity—using the Purim story to think about relationships and first-person narratives, and then creating their own modern Megillot.

Moving Traditions' first national training conference took place in Philadelphia this past August. Over 65 group leaders—Jewish women from all over the United States, many in their 20s and 30s—spent serious time talking about their own experiences. What does feminism mean today? How do we see ourselves as Jews? How can Judaism enrich our sense of ourselves as women? And how can we be good mentors and models to girls in their teens—so they can think about these questions for themselves?

One of the big topics of the training weekend was dealing with the media—from television, to fashion magazines, to Facebook. "Let's make them critical consumers, not passive recipients," said **Tami Astorino**. She asked participants to think about *Cinderella Ate My Daughter*, **Peggy Orenstein**'s book which argues that the all-pervasive media present "femininity as performance, sexuality as performance, identity as performance, each of those traits available for a price." These are tough ideas, issues that Jewish women of all ages deal with every day.

That's why an important dynamic in the Rosh Hodesh groups—for girls and facilitators alike—is to know that the *girls are the authorities of their own experience*. "It's not about you [the facilitator] imparting wisdom; it's about accessing wisdom from each other, from you, from the heart," said **Barbara Berley-Mellits**, one of the authors of the Rosh Hodesh curriculum. Fundamentally, Moving Traditions advises, it's not about telling the girls what to think—it's about telling them *to* think.

SONIA ISARD

To lessen signs and symptoms of moderate to severe Crohn's Disease in adults not helped enough by usual treatments

Important Safety Information About CIMZIA® (certolizumab pegol)

What is the most important information I should know about CIMZIA?

CIMZIA is a prescription medicine that affects your immune system. CIMZIA can lower the ability of the immune system to fight infections. Serious infections have happened in patients taking CIMZIA, including tuberculosis (TB) and infections caused by viruses, fungi, or bacteria that have spread throughout the body. Some patients have died from these infections. Your doctor should test you for TB before starting CIMZIA. Your doctor should monitor you closely for signs and symptoms of TB during your treatment with CIMZIA.

Certain Types of Cancer

There have been cases of unusual cancers in children and teenage patients using TNF-blocking agents. CIMZIA is not approved for use in pediatric patients. For people taking TNF-blocker medicines, including CIMZIA, the chances for getting lymphoma or other cancers may increase. People with RA, especially more serious RA, may have a higher chance for getting a kind of cancer called lymphoma.

Before starting CIMZIA, tell your doctor if you

- Think you have an infection. You should not start taking CIMZIA if you have any kind of infection, are being treated for an infection or have signs of an infection such as fever, cough or flu-like symptoms or if you get a lot of infections or have infections that keep coming back.
- Have any open cuts or sores
- Have diabetes or HIV
- Have TB, or have been in close contact with someone with TB
- Were born in, lived in, or traveled to countries where there is more risk of getting TB. Ask your doctor if you are not sure.
- Live or lived in certain parts of country (such as the Ohio and Mississippi River valleys) where there is an increased risk for getting certain kinds of fungal infections (histoplasmosis, coccidioidomycosis, blastomycosis). These infections may develop or become severe if you take CIMZIA. If you do not know if you have lived in these types of areas, ask your doctor.
- Have or have had hepatitis B
- Have or have had any type of cancer
- Have congestive heart failure
- Have seizures, any numbness or tingling, or a disease that affects your nervous system such as multiple sclerosis
- Are scheduled to receive a vaccine. Do not receive a live vaccine while taking CIMZIA
- Are pregnant, planning to become pregnant, or breastfeeding. CIMZIA has not been studied in pregnant or nursing women.
- Especially tell your doctor if you take: Kineret® (anakinra), Orencia® (abatacept), Rituxan® (rituximab), Tysabri® (natalizumab), or another TNF blocker. You have a higher chance for serious infections when taking CIMZIA with these medicines. You should not take CIMZIA while you take one of these medicines.

After starting CIMZIA, if you get an infection, any sign of an infection including a fever, cough, flu-like symptoms, or have open cuts or sores on your body, call your doctor right away. CIMZIA can make you more likely to get infections or make any infection that you may have worse.

What are the possible side effects of CIMZIA? CIMZIA can cause serious side effects including:

Heart Failure including new heart failure or worsening of heart failure you already have; **Nervous System Problems** such as Multiple Sclerosis, seizures, or inflammation of the nerves of the eyes; **Allergic Reactions**. Signs of an allergic reaction include a skin rash, swollen face, or trouble breathing; **Hepatitis B virus reactivation in patients who carry the virus in their blood**. In some cases, patients have died as a result of hepatitis B virus being reactivated. Your doctor should monitor you carefully during treatment with CIMZIA if you carry the hepatitis B virus in your blood; **Blood Problems**. Your body may not make enough of the blood cells that help fight infections or help stop bleeding; **Immune reactions including a lupus-like syndrome**. Symptoms include shortness of breath, joint pain, or a rash on the cheeks or arms that worsens with sun exposure.

Call your doctor right away if you develop any of the above side effects or symptoms.

The most common side effects of CIMZIA are: upper respiratory infections (flu, cold), rash, and urinary tract infections (bladder infections).

Other side effects have happened in some people including new psoriasis or worsening of psoriasis you already have and injection site reactions.

You are encouraged to report negative side effects to FDA. Visit www.fda.gov/medwatch, or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

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Please see Brief Summary on following pages.

Cimzia. Lasting Crohn's symptom relief I trust.

CIMZIA was shown in clinical trials to reduce or help stop many moderate to severe Crohn's symptoms, such as stomach pain and diarrhea, and to improve general well-being within a few short weeks in some patients. The majority of patients who responded and continued to take CIMZIA experienced sustained relief beyond 4 years with no increase in dose.

- CIMZIA is a steroid-free prescription treatment.
- CIMZIA can be injected at home or at your doctor's office every 4 weeks after initial dosing. Your results may vary.

Ask your doctor about the benefits and risks of CIMZIA.

Please read Important Safety Information on the adjacent page.

CIMZIA®
(certolizumab pegol)

Visit cimzia.com/CD
Call 1-877-55CIMZIA

Consumer Brief Summary for Cimzia® (certolizumab pegol)

CONSULT PACKAGE INSERT FOR FULL PRESCRIBING INFORMATION.

Read the Medication Guide that comes with CIMZIA before you start using it, and before each injection of CIMZIA. This brief summary does not take the place of talking with your doctor about your medical condition or treatment.

What is the most important information I should know about CIMZIA?

CIMZIA is a medicine that affects your immune system. CIMZIA can lower the ability of the immune system to fight infections. Serious infections have happened in patients taking CIMZIA. These infections include tuberculosis (TB) and infections caused by viruses, fungi or bacteria that have spread throughout the body. Some patients have died from these infections.

- Your doctor should test you for TB before starting CIMZIA.
- Your doctor should monitor you closely for signs and symptoms of TB during treatment with CIMZIA.

Before starting CIMZIA, tell your doctor if you:

- think you have an infection. You should not start taking CIMZIA if you have any kind of infection.
- are being treated for an infection
- have signs of an infection, such as a fever, cough, flu-like symptoms
- have any open cuts or sores on your body
- get a lot of infections or have infections that keep coming back
- have diabetes
- have HIV
- have tuberculosis (TB), or have been in close contact with someone with TB
- were born in, lived in, or traveled to countries where there is more risk for getting TB. Ask your doctor if you are not sure.
- live or have lived in certain parts of the country (such as the Ohio and Mississippi River valleys) where there is an increased risk for getting certain kinds of fungal infections (histoplasmosis, coccidioidomycosis, or blastomycosis). These infections may develop or become more severe if you take CIMZIA. If you do not know if you have lived in an area where histoplasmosis, coccidioidomycosis, or blastomycosis is common, ask your doctor.
- have or have had hepatitis B
- use the medicine Kineret® (anakinra), Orencia® (abatacept), Rituxan® (rituximab), or Tysabri® (natalizumab)

After starting CIMZIA, if you get an infection, any sign of an infection including a fever, cough, flu-like symptoms, or have open cuts or sores on your body, call your doctor right away. CIMZIA can make you more likely to get infections or make any infection that you may have worse.

Certain types of Cancer

- There have been cases of unusual cancers in children and teenage patients using TNF-blocking agents.
- For people taking TNF-blocker medicines, including CIMZIA, the chances of getting lymphoma or other cancers may increase.
- People with RA, especially more serious RA, may have a higher chance of getting a kind of cancer called lymphoma.

See the section "What are the possible side effects of CIMZIA?" for more information.

What is CIMZIA?

CIMZIA is a medicine called a Tumor Necrosis Factor (TNF) blocker. CIMZIA is used in adult patients to:

- Lessen the signs and symptoms of moderately to severely active Crohn's disease (CD) in adults who have not been helped enough by usual treatments.
- Treat moderately to severely active rheumatoid arthritis (RA).

It is not known whether CIMZIA is safe and effective in children.

What should I tell my doctor before starting treatment with CIMZIA?

CIMZIA may not be right for you. Before starting CIMZIA, tell your doctor about all of your medical conditions, including if you:

- **have an infection**. (See, "What is the most important information I should know about CIMZIA?")
- **have or have had any type of cancer**
- **have congestive heart failure**
- **have seizures, any numbness or tingling, or a disease that affects your nervous system such as multiple sclerosis**
- **are scheduled to receive a vaccine**. Do not receive a live vaccine while taking CIMZIA.
- **are allergic to any of the ingredients in CIMZIA**. See the end of this Brief Summary for a list of the ingredients in CIMZIA.

Tell your doctor if you are pregnant, planning to become pregnant, or breastfeeding. CIMZIA has not been studied in pregnant or nursing women.

Tell your doctor about all the medicines you take including prescription and nonprescription medicines, vitamins and herbal supplements. Your doctor will tell you if it is okay to take your other medicines while taking CIMZIA. Especially, tell your doctor if you take:

- Kineret® (anakinra), Orencia® (abatacept), Rituxan® (rituximab),Tysabri® (natalizumab). You have a high chance for serious infections when taking CIMZIA with Kineret®, Orencia®, Rituxan®, or Tysabri®.
- A TNF blocker: Remicade® (infliximab), Humira® (adalimumab), Enbrel® (etanercept), Simponi® (golimumab).

You should not take CIMZIA, while you take one of these medicines.

How should I use CIMZIA?

- If your doctor prescribes the CIMZIA lyophilized pack for reconstitution, CIMZIA should be injected by a healthcare provider.
- If your doctor prescribes the CIMZIA prefilled syringe, see the section **"Patient Instructions for Use"** at the end of the Medication Guide for complete instructions for use. Do not give yourself an injection of CIMZIA unless you have been shown by your doctor or nurse.
- CIMZIA is given by an injection under the skin, into your abdomen or thigh area. Your doctor will tell you how much CIMZIA to inject and how often to inject CIMZIA, based on your condition to be treated. Do not use more CIMZIA or inject more often than prescribed.

What are the possible side effects of CIMZIA?

CIMZIA can cause serious side effects including:

See **"What is the most important information I should know about CIMZIA?"**

- **Heart Failure** including new heart failure or worsening of heart failure you already have. Symptoms include shortness of breath, swelling of your ankles or feet, or sudden weight gain.
- **Nervous System Problems** such as multiple sclerosis, seizures, or inflammation of the nerves of the eyes. Symptoms include dizziness, numbness or tingling problems with your vision, and weakness in your arms or legs.
- **Allergic Reactions**. Signs of an allergic reaction include a skin rash, swelling of the face, tongue, lips, or throat, or trouble breathing.
- **Hepatitis B virus reactivation in patients who carry the virus in their blood**. In some cases patients have died as a result of hepatitis B virus being reactivated. Your doctor should monitor you carefully during treatment with CIMZIA if you carry the hepatitis B virus in your blood. Tell your doctor if you have any of the following symptoms:
  - feel unwell
  - poor appetite
  - tiredness (fatigue)
  - fever, skin rash, or joint pain
- **Blood Problems**. Your body may not make enough of the blood cells that help fight infections or help stop bleeding. Symptoms include a fever that doesn't go away, bruising or bleeding very easily, or looking very pale.
- **Immune reactions including a lupus-like syndrome**. Symptoms include shortness of breath, joint pain, or a rash on the cheeks or arms that worsens with sun exposure.

Call your doctor right away if you develop any of the above side effects or symptoms.

The most common side effects in people taking CIMZIA are:

- upper respiratory infections (flu, cold)
- rash
- urinary tract infections (bladder infections)

Other side effects with CIMZIA include:

- **Psoriasis**. Some people using CIMZIA had new psoriasis or worsening of psoriasis they already had. Tell your doctor if you develop red scaly patches or raised bumps that are filled with pus. Your doctor may decide to stop your treatment with CIMZIA.
- **Injection site reactions**. Redness, rash, swelling, itching or bruising can happen in some people. These symptoms will usually go away within a few days. If you have pain, redness, or swelling around the injection site that doesn't go away within a few days or gets worse, call your doctor right away.

Tell your doctor about any side effect that bothers you or does not go away.

These are not all of the side effects with CIMZIA. Ask your doctor or pharmacist for more information.

Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects. You may report side effects to FDA at 1-800-FDA-1088.

General information about CIMZIA

Medicines are sometimes prescribed for purposes that are not mentioned in Medication Guides. Do not use CIMZIA for a condition for which it was not prescribed. Do not give CIMZIA to other people, even if they have the same condition. It may harm them.

This brief summary summarizes the most important information about CIMZIA. If you would like more information, talk with your doctor. You can ask your doctor or pharmacist for information about CIMZIA that is written for health professionals.

For more information go to www.CIMZIA.com or call 1-866-4CIMZIA (424-6942).

Always keep CIMZIA, injection supplies, puncture-proof container, and all other medicines out of the reach of children.

What are the ingredients in CIMZIA?

CIMZIA lyophilized powder: Active ingredient: certolizumab pegol. Inactive ingredients: sucrose, lactic acid, polysorbate. The pack contains Water for Injection, for reconstitution of the lyophilized powder. CIMZIA prefilled syringe: Active ingredient: certolizumab pegol. Inactive ingredients: sodium acetate, sodium chloride, and Water for Injection. CIMZIA has no preservatives.

Product developed and manufactured for:
UCB, Inc., 1950 Lake Park Drive, Smyrna, GA 30080

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To lessen signs and symptoms of moderate to severe Crohn's disease in adults not helped enough by usual treatments.

Serious infections have happened in patients taking CIMZIA, including tuberculosis (TB) and infections caused by viruses, fungi, or bacteria.

cimzia®
(certolizumab pegol)

Please see Brief Summary on previous page.
*Subject to eligibility. Restrictions may apply.

CATS & ANGELS

The Rebbetzin says angels follow you and defend you when you die—unless you speak ill,
in which case the angels are injured. They bruise blue and their mouths melt shut
like some crooked river which craves to save you.

Life doesn't go quite right.
I don't leap from this porch
and scoop up the black broken cat
the way Audrey Hepburn did,
my hair isn't cast in the right light
by the street lamp, and you don't suddenly
realize something about love.
Neither of us does.

Instead, the cat, all bone
wobbles up the street as we watch.
She goes to the cat lady's house.

Cat ladies, emptying their homes like shoeboxes,
filling them with slabs of salmon, dirty paws.
Bodies curl and stretch—
corners of the room purr or hiss,
her sofa claws at the air and turns its hundred heads.

Nothing is her own.
Any treasure is a love nest,
a violent neighborhood,
is a bed is a weapon is war.
She has given up the graceful sway
of her hips, and stumbles across the moving floor.

Our own angels sit dumb and gnarled,
staring at us with swollen eyes.
They try humming as we laugh about the cat lady—

the fear of turning into her,
the smell her house spits out into the street after it rains.

We sit on our porches,
are sent the chance of selflessness
in the form of fur and heart.
We call those chances filthy and send them back
down the road to the cat lady.
It is our only conversation with her.
"Keep them."
The angels help her pour dry food,
which rattles into every dish.

RAE ROSE

YIZKOR *for a* MARRIAGE

BY GAIL HOSKING

THE MOMENT MY HUSBAND of 33 years left for a year-long fellowship in D.C., things began to go wrong. The dog got deathly sick. Squirrels ate a hole in the ceiling. The kitchen island started wobbling.

All that fall I thought of my husband in his rented apartment with nothing to fix, the new Tibetan carpet he insisted he needed, and the first quilt I'd ever made lying over his couch. While I paid the bills, taught at the university, took the dying dog to the vet and slept in an empty bed, my middle-aged women friends said they were jealous of my opportunity to be on my own. I, though, noticed white-haired women shopping alone in the grocery store and couples walking hand in hand. I was lonely.

My husband called me at home every day. Perfunctory-feeling calls to say he was doing well. He didn't want to hear about the dog or the ceiling. He wanted to talk about his new card at the Library of Congress and what the Senate was debating. He wanted to name people he'd seen at the Capitol. I came down with tendinitis in my right arm.

When I visited him the first time, he told me he had an event to go to and wouldn't be able to have dinner with me.

"I think I'll find something to do on my own," I said. "Otherwise I'll feel sad knitting on the couch. Wouldn't you?"

"I don't knit," he said.

During the second visit, he told me over a glass of wine that he wished he could disappear. He didn't mean death, he assured me, but that he wanted a permanent vacation. I said I understood that need.

"YOU ARE NOT MY PROBLEM," HE SAID to my tearful face as he undid his tie one evening when I'd asked, again, what was wrong. He refused to say anything more except that he hadn't figured everything out. I wondered what "everything" meant. I feared the unholy breaking inside us. Bone against dream. The conversation didn't go further because I couldn't bring myself to ask anything more. I wanted him to say something to resuscitate us. I wanted him to speak about the deep rivers below the floorboards of our lives. I wanted him to sing something before our voices forgot the song. But I was left with silence.

In March my birthday arrived without a card or present. It was the first time that had ever happened. I tried not to care. At home, I ate out with friends and admired the flowers and cards sent by our sons. I read my horoscope that told me to stop expecting things to be the way they "should." That didn't help the panics that started to arrive each night around midnight, or the insomnia. I left yellow sticky notes around the house so I wouldn't forget the basics: exercise, return phone calls, walk the dog.

Later that spring we flew together to Peru for a friend's wedding. My husband was cordial but distant. Once in a while he held my hand on the plane, but then he would let it go as if he had changed his mind suddenly. At the wedding he drank too much, talked to everyone but me about politics and possible law school, then slept on his side of the bed as though clinging to an exit. Three days into our stay at a beach, I awoke in the middle of the night feeling feverish and violently ill. I vomited for hours, sicker than I'd ever been in my life. From the bathroom, I called his name but he didn't answer.

That morning, when I finally fell back to sleep, I dreamed about narrow path-

ART BY ORLI MARBERG, COURTESY OF NOGA GALLERY OF CONTEMPORARY ART

ways that went nowhere, then about new clothes that didn't fit. Nap after nap, I visited foreign countries and studied for a test I knew I'd fail. I dreamed about banks being robbed. *We will get caught*, I said, *because people always do.*

Two weeks later he flew home from D.C. for a weekend visit, saying we had lots to talk about. He sat in the rocking chair by the bed and sipped coffee, while I lay in bed like we'd done a million Saturday mornings before. I leaned back on my pillow to listen.

"It's another woman," he said finally, as casually as if talking about the need for a new kitchen faucet. A calm silence came first, then shock, freezing my posture on the bed. My mind traveled back to the past and forward to the future at the same time. He reached over to hug me as though his announcement would be okay with the familiar touch of our bodies. But his unmoored words had already shaken down the smoke along the plumb line of our lives. I did my best to step through the fog that suddenly engulfed me.

Later the tears came, slowly at first, then wildly while I ran down the street, tripping over my feet, my lungs sucking in thin air. Surges of sharp sorrow cut through me and hardened inside while I leaned against a church wall, my body rocking like a child who no longer understood the world.

I DREAMED THAT FIRST NIGHT OF A t-shirt with the word "attachment" written across it, then wondered in the morning what to do with that word now that he was gone. I blew out heavy breaths like I was trying to rekindle a fire across a room. Later that week I said over the phone that this wasn't fair.

"What isn't fair?" he asked.

"This," I said.

"Life isn't fair," he said.

That night I awoke like a wounded animal trying to get comfortable, then rested on the floor pounding the empty air. I lifted myself up on all fours twisting and turning as though I were in labor and had to deliver an enormous baby. I screamed until I couldn't. Then my mouth froze in silence with questions that I feared would never be answered.

When he returned from D.C. for good, he moved into his own apartment, and I drove by like a broken adolescent. We met to talk over coffee, and he told me he was still with that woman, that he wanted a divorce and to sell the house. He hoped I would not ask for money. I was surprised that I was surprised, and realized that I'd been holding the book open, waiting for the nightmare to end and for him to come home. I noticed he wasn't wearing his wedding ring, and when I asked he said he wasn't living like a married man. I was in mourning, I said. I was sitting shiva with no one there but myself.

I'd been holding the book open, waiting for him to come home.

AT YOM KIPPUR THAT FALL, I SAT alone in the synagogue's balcony that overlooked a crowd of families and generations. I couldn't help but notice children with their parents, babies on grandparents' laps, husbands with their arms around their wives. Fasting was making me voraciously hungry. My breath seemed to slip, its sound like small stale whispers. For a moment I felt angels in the sanctuary, then the terror of being alive. When the cantor, dressed in her white *kittel*, otherwise worn for weddings, chanted the ancient melancholy notes of loss and forgiveness, I swore I saw a wave of grief swell across the congregation like a solid mist of tears. *Kol Nidre* penetrated my bones with every note, every pause, every shift of the cantor's voice. I felt certainty peeling from my ribs.

The rabbi spoke about private and public mourning, the need to give and receive forgiveness, the gates of heaven that would close by the end of this holiest of days. I sat and fully listened, trying once again to make sense of everything I'd once trusted. Later, as my hunger made me feel lightheaded and my arguments with life multiplied, *Yizkor*, the service for the dead, began. It was then that I felt my right hand reach over to my left, and I slipped off my wedding ring without any prior thought or plan. I studied its three shades of gold twisted together, I traced the pink, yellow and white, and thought of how we'd chosen this metaphor—for braided lives, believing we'd be together forever. Now I felt pieces of matter coming apart in my hands.

I placed the ring gently in my pocket and wondered about the mysterious ways of the universe. Among the mourners, I longed to understand the boundaries of self, to understand safety. I wanted to believe, as the rabbi insisted, that new life would come. I wanted to believe I could endure.

Against the backdrop of familiar chanted prayers, I realized I was not the first, nor last, to know sorrow. When it came to deaths, there was often no fairness, no explanation. Death's wind was forceful and old and wild with sorrowful melody. It would come to all of us. And life would keep changing, would carry on. As I walked to my house after the services, I knew this as I'd not really ever known it before.

I PAUSED IN THE EARLY AUTUMN sunshine with its dappled light coming through transfiguring trees, and considered the passing of this small civilization my husband and I had created. The bright blue sky mocked the language of endings, the laments of new knowledge. I turned the key in the door thinking about the *sukkah* we would soon build to peer through the overhead boughs of our impermanent homes. I thought about how it *is*—that each year we sit there faithfully looking up, trying to embrace the stars. ■

Gail Hosking is the author of the memoir Snake's Daughter: The Roads in and out of War, *University of Iowa Press. She teaches at Rochester Institute of Technology.*

CELEBRATING 35 YEARS OF JEWISH WOMEN'S STORIES

Senior Editor Susan Schnur Gives a Guided Tour

IF YOU WOKE ME UP IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT AND asked me to name a single memorable Lilith story that I'd worked on, I know what I'd pick. A manuscript that came over the transom 20-plus years ago from a woman in her late thirties who'd been born in a deportation camp in Italy, her parents having lost previous children (and spouses) in the Holocaust. The author wrote compassionately about her parents, but she also described a childhood in which she felt chronically overwhelmed by her inability to soothe them, to feel sufficient, to make her own life feel safe. The story was about her decision not to have children. "Being my parents' only child has exhausted me," she wrote. "I am sucked dry and empty, and terrified of this world."

It's not easy to edit a story like this, but I'd worked on scores of profoundly personal ones during my tenure at Lilith, so I dug in, the author and I sending queries and revisions back and forth. The manuscript stretched and morphed, first subtly, but then hugely, from the gut. No longer a pathography, it had become a vision of something entirely different. "And so against this backdrop of heavy burden, I choose to parent," she wrote, "determined and curious."

Some years later I bumped into this writer and her children. Her daughter was 10; her twin boys, eight-and-a-half.

Somewhere along the line, I don't remember exactly when, I started calling Lilith my "paper pulpit" (I'm a rabbi)—and so it

has been for 24 years. Writer by writer, essay by essay, helping other Jewish women tell their stories has felt to me like a sacred project. By writing, Lilith's authors bring their real selves into daylight. By putting their writing between the magazine's covers, they change other Jewish women; they also, I believe, perform *tikkun olam* on the institution of Judaism itself.

IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE that for 35 years now, Jewish women's personal stories have poured into our Lilith office, unsolicited manuscripts from Santa Fe, Vancouver, Beersheva, London, Knoxville and Buenos Aires. We read every submission, blessed to feel that our lives have brought us to this communal watering hole; or, you might say, brought us to a kind of "Third Temple" for Jewish-and-female pilgrims seeking to gather, testify, empathize, learn and listen.

Aware that Judaism has disenfranchised women for millennia, we feel lucky to have been born into these transformational decades wherein women are finally inside the Trojan horse. And as so many Jews everywhere struggle to find a Judaism that works for them in this fledgling century, we women, along with gays, lesbians, the transgendered and Jews of color, are aware of being the last "real" diaspora Jews; still in possession, that is, of Judaism's age-old "outsider" eye, with the feistiness, truth-telling and vision that are its derivatives. We are writing our worlds—day by day, decade by decade—and fundamentally repurposing Judaism.

IN THE MAIL THIS WEEK at Lilith, there is good stuff, submissions that are not atypical, that provide a peephole into contemporary Jewish women's lives. In the first-person department, here's what we got: a story from a cantor about her new vocation as a *mohel;* a story from a JewBu about her quest for the right Jewish mantra; a piece from a Syrian-Jewish woman about sustaining her 40-year marriage in the context of the uber-patriarchal community in which she lives; a piece from a young Australian woman about being raped in Jerusalem and navigating a Zionist-inflected trauma; a havdalah ceremony created by a group of girlfriends to honor their female mentors; and a novelty piece of sorts from a convert to Judaism who discovered, after the conversion, that she'd already been a Jew. I might as well add the two memoir pieces currently in your hands [Lilith Fall 2011], "The 500-Year-Old Rabbi" and "Guiding My Child Through Cancer." Both are surprising portraits of what it means to be a female rabbi, and both, unsurprisingly, use relationship as their lens.

As a living genizah, this material kills. And we're sitting on 35 years of it.

OVER THE LAST 15 OR SO YEARS, THE GENRE OF memoir has reached craze proportions and the form itself has become, in some circles, a very dirty word. Daniel Mendelsohn in The New Yorker, for example, likened memoir to "a drunken guest at a wedding … constantly mortifying its soberer relatives—motivated, it would seem, by an overpowering need to be the center of attention." "Therapeutic purges [solve] nothing more than getting a shameful secret off your chest," he writes. And Neil Genzlinger of The New York Times penned a scathing anti-memoir piece that made the rounds. "A moment of silence, please, for the lost art of shutting up," was his terrific opening.

Though there is no question that exhibitionist and opportunistic writers are out there, and that falsified autobiography has added to the genre's bad name, it's also the case that there's a longstanding tradition of male reviewers who are revolted by women who write honestly and intimately about their lives. Susan Cheever's memoir—no actually, Susan Cheever herself—got a vividly pathetic savaging at the hands of Jonathan Yardley in the Washington Post: "professional daughter, alcoholic variety. Another chapter in the…glorification of a life that long ago lost any claim on the attentions of others." It made me feel sorry, *nebekh*, for Jonathan Yardley.

The feminist scholar Carolyn Heilbrun has written about this phenomenon, noting that the work of Anne Sexton and Sylvia Plath, for example, was initially "dismissed [by male reviewers] as disgustingly autobiographical," while male confessional writers, like the poets Robert Lowell or John Berryman, "did not suffer such assaults. Their themes were seen as universal truths."

Heilbrun points out that "Many current memoirs deal with questions that society has preferred to leave unexamined." And she has a pointed phrase—"female impersonators"—for women who have disfigured their "real" lives in order to satisfy convention. These women's "real" autobiographies never get lived, nor written.

IT'S AGAINST AN UNDERSTANDING of this backdrop that Lilith started publishing women's personal essays in 1976, in only its second issue, asking 10 women (in 11 pages, a serious editorial commitment), "What choices and changes have you made to live life as a Jewish feminist?" In the introduction to the narratives, the editors insert a didactic note that in retrospect seems charmingly ancient: "We decided to ask this question since every woman is an expert on her own life." Okay, so maybe not so charmingly ancient.

The pieces are wide-ranging and astute, but what surprises the most are the writers' seriousness and urgency, as though they'd just been shaken awake by the poet Muriel Rukeyser's famous couplet (from "Kathe Kollwitz"): "What would happen if one woman told the truth about her life?/ The world would split open."

Rachel Adler writes about being "an [Orthodox] woman without a community," having painfully seen the light when her rabbi informed her that she couldn't say kaddish for her grandmother, but that "for $350, I could hire a man." "My grandmother's death made me a Jewish feminist," she writes. And Evelyn Hutt Dodd writes about working up the courage to talk to her husband about their "sexual difficulties, broach[ing] the subject with mikveh in mind." She describes setting out for the mikveh for the first time, alleviating her nerves by "having a little conversation with…the motherly, sisterly aspect of God instead of the fatherly one." All the way through the essay you can feel Dodd's head exploding with brand-new thoughts. "I would guess that if we observed mikveh and niddah as single women, we would respect our own bodies much sooner and therefore respect ourselves, and out of self-respect grow healthier relationships whether we choose to be married or single or straight or gay."

Wow. Re-encountering these essays from the distance of 35 years feels great. These are our foremothers, gnawing away at it all: politics, ideology, gender, theology, religious observance, Zionism, sexuality, socialization.

These stories made me think about another Lilith piece, from just last year, about Rabbi Julie Greenberg, a woman whose family has included "a series of female lovers, two rabbinic sperm donors, two adoptions and one gay parenting partner." Mendelsohn and Genzlinger would surely cringe at her "oversharing" (Genzlinger's word), but we at Lilith thought that Greenberg's willingness to trust a reporter with such sensationalizable material was brave. We believed that Greenberg had something to teach: about women breaking norms in the service of having really thought through what is right for them. Indeed, most Jewish mothers are "majority culture" on these issues—that is, heterosexual with biological children—and thus fall into conventional patterns without even imagining there might be better fits. I dunno, did you ever think you might want a "parenting partner" who was separate from your husband-slash-"romantic partner?" Or, as was the case for Jenifer Firestone (in a companion story to Greenberg's), are you someone who braved the sacrilege of legally working out ahead of time your precise plan to be a half-time parent? We don't think so.

We textify.
We write.
We talk.
That's what
Jewish women do.
We kiss words.
We have a lot to say.

As Carolyn Heilbrun points out, the objective of sharing our lives is "to tell what has not been told before, or has not been told in the public sphere by women to women." Lilith runs stories from a place of compassion, from a place of understanding that the personal is the political is the universal. And we see it as our mission to help readers along, to challenge readers, using empathy to stretch ourselves, to strengthen the Jewish-female habit of thinking for ourselves.

AND SO DESPITE MEMOIR'S besmirched reputation in some parts, I can't say I recall Lilith's ever getting a personal essay that struck us as stunt-like, indiscreet, mendacious, hyperbole-driven, self-worshiping, exhibitionist or pointlessly purgative (all adjectives sucked from viable memoir-bashers). Granted, nobody's sending us manuscripts to get rich or famous. I guess that's a good thing. What we get, on the contrary, are stories that are authentic and thoughtful, with appropriate public/private boundaries. Why should Lilith's experience be so positive? What self-selection makes a writer say to herself, "I think I'll send this story to Lilith magazine"?

I'd argue that the stories women send us are written from the perspective of looking for a minyan; that is, of understanding that one's story belongs to, and requires, a community. One of the fascinating things about a minyan is that it's often the presence of total strangers—strangers who selflessly show up in order to make a minyan happen for, say, a mourner—that permits one to recite *devarim sheh-bekedushah*, specific prayers that are considered "extra holy." The kaddish, wedding blessings, taking the Torah scrolls out to read from them—you have to have 10. Milestones, grief, loss, love, joy, anxiety, transitions; for the rites of comforting mourners, you have to have 10. It's the Jewish privileging of interdependence, the knowledge of communal embrace, that allows us to dig deeper.

Lilith's readers are the internalized minyan that facilitate the stories written by our authors; our readers make the stories *devarim sheh-bekedushah*. In Judaism, there's a value to the witnessing community; our primary spiritual experiences are plural. So I would say that a reason that Lilith doesn't get crass or false or inflated memoir submissions is that our writers pen holier "prayers," they dig deeper, because they're not in it to be alone.

Especially in pre-Internet days, Lilith received a tremendous number of manuscripts from women in small towns (like "Frontier Bris,"), in cities that didn't have feminist-shul alternatives, from women who didn't conventionally pray, from women who hadn't discovered like-minded Jews where they lived, who had no Jewish community—no "minyans" with whom to share their heretical-seeming thoughts. And when a Lilith editor made a phone call to accept a manuscript—always a gratifying task—the writer's delight was generally spiritual as well as literary. There's a minyan out there for me! Thank you for providing

a place where I can speak my most sacred words, my counter-narratives, for providing a homeland where Jewish feminists have my back. For Lilith writers, I would argue, the "I" feels more like a "we." The Other within.

And as for our readers, as in a halakhic minyan, just saying "Amen" is equal in efficacy to having recited the actual prayer, to having written this author's story, too. "Me, too, sister. Say it. So may it be." A great deal of validation passes from writer to reader.

There are many stories through the years that I think saw the light because of this internalized minyan. To name a few: "A Childhood Without Parents" (about being orphaned in Cologne, Germany, in 1913), "And Vashti Refused: A Gay Man Finds a Biblical Role Model," "*A La Recherche du* Taiglach *Perdu*" (about searching for particular memories in food), "Out of Africa: A Jewish Woman's Modern-Day Exodus from Ethiopia," "Orthodox Feminists: Desperately Seeking Dialogue," "An Immigrant Again…This Time in a Country Called Widowhood," "How to Hide: Instructions from a Daughter of Survivors," "Jewish Daughters and Fathers: From Silence to Speech," "Embroidery as Prayer," "The Ways of Love and Rage: Duty and Intractable Sexism Fuel a Complex Caregiving History" (about the daughter of Baghdadi Jews who, as the disparaged female child, struggles with caregiving her elderly parents), "Surviving Suicide," "All Who Are Hungry: Anorexia and the Seder," "Rhythms of the Blood: Sex in an Orthodox Marriage," "A Good Egg: A Donor's Story," "Losing a Child: How Grief Fueled Three Mothers' Activism," "With This Wedding, I Leave Myself Behind." And many more deeply thoughtful pieces for which our writers knew there'd be a minyan.

The most trusting writer I ever worked with was someone who spoke with me solely by speakerphone from her psychiatrist's office. Week after week, we wrote together for precisely 45 minutes. It was the psychiatrist who chose Lilith as the right "container" for this woman's tale, a tale about losing everything, and everyone, as a toddler, in the aftermath of a transport to a concentration camp. This unusual method was the only way the author could walk through her story. She has gone on to significant acclaim.

Karen Propp, a Lilith author who has published two books of memoir and co-edited an anthology of personal essays, tells her students: "If you want to write a good memoir, you must be able to answer the question: Who cares?"

Writers who bring their stories to our readers—whether it's a 13-year-old who shares that she got her first period at Pizza Hut, a 13-year-old's mother who writes about the sanctity of the Irish claddagh on her daughter's *tallis*, a 87-year-old great-aunt talking about how her mother had just wanted her father to be affectionate, that's all, to put his arm around her at the movies ("I says to Ma, 'So you just take his arm and put it!' And she says, 'Syb, but that's not the same.'")—they can all answer that question, "Who cares?" Their minyan is waiting for their story.

OF COURSE, ONCE YOU'RE LOOKING AT HALF A lifetime of Jewish women's stories, you're seeing a developmental arc, the curve of the earth. Thirty five years is, already, history. Indeed, in our early years we saw significantly less memoir than we do now, and the submissions we saw tended towards feminist "conversion narratives," a classic genre that starts with "once below a time" and, for Lilith writers, anyway, ends with Eve biting the apple and, poof!, becoming a feminist. Or at least becoming *fahrtootzed* overnight.

Writer by writer, piece by piece, helping other women tell their stories has felt to us like a sacred project.

A classic Lilith essay by Blu Greenberg in 1982 charts the complex and cholent-slow making of an Orthodox feminist. Greenberg starts by describing her understanding of the *mechitzah* (the divider between the men's and women's sections of Orthodox synagogues) as "ancient, natural, the immutable order of male and female" and of herself as a young, single Orthodox girl too obedient to pursue her dream of "following [brilliant, extraordinary] Nechama Leibowitz to all the places she taught, to learn from her day and night." ("I quietly knew," she writes, "that had I been a young man wanting to study intensively with

a special Israeli *rebbe*, every encouragement would have been forthcoming.") Like many women in Greenberg's cohort, she reads Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963. It terrifies her. "The essential idea, equality of women, was exciting, mind-boggling…and very just," Greenberg writes, "but it didn't mean me. [It did not] apply to women in Judaism." Shortly thereafter, though, wouldn't you know, "isolated incidents [begin] to emerge as…pattern[s]" of exclusion:

Females can't study Talmud, Greenberg's daughter isn't invited to sing from the *bimah*, only grandsons can accompany Uncle Izzie's casket down the aisle. In 1973, Greenberg holds a Torah scroll for the first time. "Choose someone else," she had pleaded, when, at her first female minyan, she glimpsed two female *gabba'ot* [prayer assistants] coming to snag her as *hagba'ah*. By the end of the piece, she has toughened up, but is still movingly on a long-term journey of integration.

Through the '80s and '90s, Lilith received an interesting ton of what we came to call "*bubbe* stories," hagiographies set against candlelit immigrant pasts and grandmothers who gave "unconditional love"—that's what they all gave. Mine, too. Well, one of mine. In these narratives, American-born Moms are absent. In a piece by Toby Joan Rosenstrauch [1989], she describes her grandmother at her overflowing holiday table looking out over all her progeny: "*Ale fun mayn kerper aroysgegangen*," she *kvells*. "All of you have come from my body." How great is that? Needless to say, these manuscripts arrive no more; the women who wrote them have become *pareve* American grandmothers about whom no one is writing. Yet.

The real and painful march of time now pertains to Holocaust memoirs. They first appeared on the scene abruptly, dams bursting their floodgates, literally dozens of manuscripts and books (the latter to review) pouring on our doorstep by the month, and then, 20 or so years later, just as suddenly, dried to a trickle. Stopped. I would give anything now to find these manuscripts in our mail, to push time away.

A palpably strange aspect of these memoirs was that we immediately knew the age of their authors: almost always in their sixties, sometimes in their seventies, rarely in their early eighties. Unlike men who'd survived, who often told their tales sooner, these women all started writing after they'd raised their children, lived their lives, and felt a gravitational pull to return to the horrors, to keep faith with their parents, their aborted childhoods, the shattered worlds of Before and Over There. Many were written by daughters as tributes to their mothers to whom they felt they owed their lives. Many survivors described a compulsion to dislodge a weight.

"At times I felt on the brink of insanity when I wrote about my parents, brothers, all of my family and was forced to lose them and mourn all over again," wrote Alicia Appleman-Jurman. "When I finally finished writing I felt as though I had come out of intensive care after a painful and very dangerous operation. I realized that my family will always continue to live inside me and through me." Writing as ordeal and as catharsis cannot be clearer.

Not reviewing each Holocaust book felt terrible. Then children's books began appearing, written by those who'd survived as children. At one point, we gathered armloads of books and mailed them to young reviewers, ages 4 to 12. We were aghast at our library of terror; certainly non-Jewish children were not getting these Happy Meals. I made up templates for our little stringers, one question being, "How old should you be to read this book?" After reading one selection, our 10-year-old reviewer wrote, "No one is old enough to read this book."

IT IS TRUE THAT MANUSCRIPTS that are sometimes pegged as "narcissistic" in the larger culture, about women's troubled or literally navel-gazing relationships with our own bodies—eating disorders, piercing, tattooing, cutting—are submitted to Lilith often now; we rarely saw these in Lilith's early years. I don't view these stories as narcissistic. I see them as dyadic relationships forged in an ever-lonelier world in which a sense of community has disappeared: a girl's *relationship* with her anorexia, a woman's *relationship* with her tattoos. They remind me of the time my 5-year-old was in the car with only one plastic soldier. He ripped one leg off the soldier with his teeth and proceeded to have an all-out battle. "Who do you think's gonna win?" he asked. "The soldier or the leg?" Some of these manuscripts make us sad, but they underscore, to my mind, a ferocious will to relatedness.

A category of manuscript that is, thankfully, evergreen and clearly moves into the larger Jewish world is that of appropriated ritual. "The New, Improved Jewish Divorce: Hers/His," in which Vicki Hollander (1990) follows her traditional *get* with a ceremony of her own making surrounded by female friends is one of many stories we've run over the years that situates itself in the healing surround of women. Authentic and simple, these remain fresh. "I am not all alone," Hollander says to her girl-minyan over casseroles and almond tarts. "Today marks not only the closure of my marriage, but formally recognizes how my friends have been with me through all of this." Her Document of Transition, a bookend to the *get*, includes, "I stand as a Jewish woman with dignity and strength. I stand restored to a single unit as a whole and complete person…in accordance with the values of our people Israel."

"How Do Women Define the Sacred?" (2006) felt to us an important set of personal stories that sought to name specific qualities—memory, the senses, handiwork, healing, motherhood, ancestors—that women find holy; Lilith's intention was to bring to consciousness the vast savannas of absent liturgy that still beg to be written.

Multiculturalism and political inquiry remain mainstays: "Casting Miss Saigon's Baby," by Hoong Yee Lee Krakauer, about taking her 3-year-old to a Broadway open-casting for "an Asian/American no taller than 41 inches," "A Daughter Remembers: The Doctors' Plot of 1953," "Red-Diaper Daughter," "Women in the Israeli Military," "Identity Politics at Summer Camp," "Young Teens Take Back the Night," "When Our Parents Neglected Us to Save the World," "Who Owns My Breasts?" "In the Hammam," "Autism Moms," "Latina Jews in New York," "Blessings for Gender Transitions," "Eco-Ushpizin" (about inviting eco-activists into our sukkot)—Lilith's writers continue to blossom at new borders.

By the way, Mikki Lee, the "Chewish" (Chinese/Ashkenazi) toddler didn't get the part of Tam in Miss Saigon. But what's more unnerving, looking at her scrumptious little face on Lilith's Fall 1991 cover, is that she's now 25.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED IN 35 YEARS ABOUT Jewish women's memoir? When the writer Stephen Dubner converts from Catholicism back to the faith of his grandparents, what shocks him most is seeing Jews kiss the Torah in shul. "It's a *book*," he marvels. "They're not eating the Body and drinking the Blood of the Christ."

We textify. We write. We talk. That's what Jewish women do. We have a lot to say. We kiss words. When Sholom Aleichem created the character Tevye, he movingly fashioned a father who remains very proud of his daughters' ability to talk, even as their choices bring him pain. "She answers me word for word," Tevye says delightedly about Hodel as she disregards his wishes. "She doesn't lose her dignity. Tevye's daughters can talk!" Indeed, Tevye's daughters are not about to endorse "a moment of silence for the lost art of shutting up." What's the virtue in that? As Grace Paley said, "In the grave, it will be quiet."

Paley, also a Lilith author, the mother of all talking Jewish women, best captures the warm collective portrait of Lilith's writers and readers talking and listening through the decades; of writers giving readers the idea to write, too; and of writing about oneself as being fundamentally an act of sharing. "People ought to live in mutual aid and concern, listening to one another's stories," Paley says. Most of her stories, indeed, are *about* talking—that's the action—talking to rewrite the self, to think, talking as revision, talking as an act of inclusion and moral obligation. She understands that communities of support crystallize around women telling their stories. One of her many sympathetic narrators famously says, "I did owe something to my family and the families of my friends…to tell their stories as simply as possible, in order, you might say, to save a few lives." And Paley's characters, like Lilith's authors, tell stories embedded in relationship; not only the relationships *in* their stories, but the relationships created through the telling. The truth that lies between us, not in us.

Jewish women write about their lives for the following reasons:

As Jews, we tell our stories because centuries of displacement and uncertainty have made the locus of our real lives shift to the insides of our heads. We have very rich lives in there. And because we have been taught that *zachor*—remembering—has saving, sometimes mythic, power. We tell our stories because we are an intimate, urgent people, children of Moses and Job who demanded very real conversations even with God, who insisted that God talk to them like a *mentsch*.

As women, we tell our stories because we are the keepers, the savers, the connectors, the ultimate recyclers, the memory-holders. We must put things in our stories to keep those things from ceasing to exist. We don't believe that memory is private. We hold that the commonplace is sacred. We tell our stories to upend the history of women being silenced. We write *for* the silenced; we write to catch up. We write ourselves out of indeterminate identities. Those of us of Ashkenazi stock were for generations hatched from a public language, Yiddish, a populist tongue whose basic purpose was women sharing.

The stories are written from the perspective of looking for a minyan, of understanding that one's story belongs to, and requires, a community of Jewish women.

As Jewish women, we tell our stories because Jewish history is a catalogue of losses, and we are the keepers of memory, loss, grief and healing. We tell our stories because we are giddy with freedom, because we are very conscious that, in the long arc of Jewish history, our lives are transitional. We tell our stories because Judaism approves of self-invention, because we find everything interesting, because we believe that no lives are ordinary, because it's responsible. Because the unheard voices of Jewish women signifies a crime.

We remove a rib from our past, from our present, and breathe life into it for the purpose of creating our own stories. ■

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A (Re)Consideration of JEWISH SORORITIES

BY SHIRA KOHN

Remember the opening scene of *Legally Blonde*? Or the Saturday Night Live salutation "Delta, Delta, Delta, can I help ya, help ya, help ya?" To many observers, sororities look like the embodiment of values you'd love to hate—elitism, conformity, traditionalism, and perhaps even "inauthentic" or "superficial" expressions of Jewish identity. Cinematic representations aside, there's an alternative narrative. Here's a tip: watch for a hidden proto-feminist agenda in Jewish sorority life.

As someone who has invested a lot of time (10 years!) and intellectual energy (a doctoral dissertation!) examining the history of these Greek organizations, I've come to recognize Jewish sororities as an underrated, unsung resource for developing Jewish women's leadership. Through the many decades of their existence, they've offered their 100,000-plus current members and alumnae a chance to hone communication skills, troubleshoot obstacles (have you ever tried to balance a household budget for 40 people at the age of 20?), and as undergraduates, develop career strategies using an established network of women already primed to be mentors. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg (opposite), Senator Barbara Boxer, astronaut Judith Resnick, Rockefeller Foundation president Judith Rodin and novelist Lauren Weisberger are some of the Jewish sorority alumnae who have made their mark as activists, rabbis, leaders and educators.

So entertain for a moment the hypothesis that sororities are in fact useful institutions for promoting Jewish feminist identity and that they provide a unique alternative to established religious and cultural Jewish groups on today's campuses. Sororities appealed to a wide swath of Jewish women from the decades of their founding in the 1900s and 1910s until the end of the 1960s, when the rise of second wave feminism and the crescendo of the civil rights movement led many college students to embrace differences and individuality while rejecting any institution that appeared to endorse conformity or sectarianism. The next 20 years saw stagnation or decline for the Greek system in general. And since Jewish students, for a number of reasons, were overrepresented in social-change movements, many of them turned their backs on sorority recruiters. "This was an period of anti-establishment sentiment on campuses across the country, for both general Greek and Jewish Greek organizations," said Bonnie Rubenstein Wunsch, Executive Director of the Jewish sorority Alpha Epsilon Phi.

Simultaneously, in the 1960s and 70s, the diminishing interest in Greek life led non-Jewish fraternities and sororities to scout out new members from ethnic and religious minorities they'd previously excluded or even shunned. Some Jewish students took advantage of the opportunity to join organizations previously barred to them, thus contributing to a dramatic membership decline in the Jewish houses. To appeal to a wider variety of students in hopes of boosting their numbers, two Jewish sororities, Delta Phi Epsilon and Phi Sigma Sigma, decided to rebrand themselves by moving away from any acknowledgement or celebration of their Jewish roots and identity. Slowly, they opened up several new chapters on campuses with few Jewish students, and today both have a majority of non-Jewish women as members. The other two sororities, Alpha Epsilon Phi and Sigma Delta Tau, continued to market themselves mostly to Jews, but were able to open up only two or three new chapters during the 1970s, a significant decrease considering that these national sororities had previously expanded, on average, by more than 10 chapters per decade. "It was a time of more loss than gain," Wunsch reported.

Is there a hidden, proto-feminist agenda in Jewish sorority life?

Then Jewish sororities also began to accept non-Jewish women in slightly larger numbers. And, while these four sororities were able to stay afloat during the 1970s and early 1980s, Jewish sororities had every reason to believe that their golden age was over.

But not so fast. Interestingly, in the past decade Jewish sororities have experienced a renaissance, increasing their membership and raising their profile both on campus and in the larger community. Sigma Delta Tau, according to Executive Director Ann Braly, has seen a 17% increase in membership over the last two years, and now boasts a membership of over 5,300 women on more than a hundred campuses across the country.

A widespread embrace of multiculturalism in the 1990s meant greater appreciation for pride within many minority populations, especially on campus. The decade witnessed the founding of several Latino and Asian and Pacific Islander fraternities and sororities, particularly in the western and southern states. African-American sororities, many of which also started early in the 20th century, when the Jewish groups were founded,

also witnessed a rise in membership and proliferation of new chapters. Society's new level of acceptance of ethnic differences allowed for the creation of niche groups catering to these students, and Jews were part of this trend. The way the Black Pride movement of the 1960s spurred a greater outspokenness for Jews around the time of the 1967 Six-Days' War, Jewish fraternities and sororities in the 1990s became places where Jewish students could comfortably self-identify while strengthening explicitly Jewish experiences.

Missy Present, an alumna of Alpha Epsilon Phi at George Washington University, explained her own decision to join a Jewish sorority as "finding a community similar to what I had at home [growing up]...a connection with a group of women [with] whom I shared a set of ideals, including educational goals and leadership aspirations on campus." For Present and many other college students, the sorority offered both familiarity and a launching pad for involvement in activities beyond the group itself. She said she employed the recruitment skills learned in her sorority in her work at Hillel on campus while she was an undergraduate and later in her professional life, working in Hillel's national office; she is now the Undergraduate Director of Admissions at the Jewish Theological Seminary.

It's fascinating that the reasons for renewed interest in Jewish sororities today are the same ones articulated by the founders of these organizations a century ago. Jewish sororities emerged on college campuses during the first two decades of the 20th century. They formed only when a critical mass of Jews began to attend secular institutions. Iota Alpha Pi, the first Jewish sorority, was founded in 1903 at Hunter College in New York. (These women called themselves the "JAPS" when translating the "I" in "Iota" to a "J" in English—no connection to the later opprobrium of "Jewish American Princess.") Alpha Epsilon Phi, founded at Barnard College in 1909, is the oldest Jewish sorority still in existence. Women who founded this sorority, and later, those who started Phi Sigma Sigma, Delta Phi Epsilon and Sigma Delta Tau, came together to counter the social anti-Semitism of the time—non-Jewish Greek organizations unabashedly barred their doors to Jewish students—and to build community with other Jewish women. They "wanted to join a group that was not biased by prejudices of religion or any racial discrimination," in the words of one Alpha Epsilon Phi founder, and vowed to create "a place void of pettiness where our ideals as young women could be fostered and nourished." Even in those days, Jewish sororities provided their members with a "safe space" on campus to pursue their intellectual and social goals.

Their members were women not unlike their Jewish peers who didn't join Greek life. They all likely had slightly more disposable income than the average college student of that era, a function of the growing middle-class status of American Jews. While most were first-generation Americans, their families had already become less traditional in religious observance; for example, parents didn't mind their daughters spending Friday nights at mixers with single men (so long as chaperones were present). In fact, many parents embraced a daughter's decision to join a Jewish sorority in the hope that she would mingle with eligible Jewish men whom she could and would marry.

Marriage to an educated Jewish man was one way a Jewish woman in the early 20th century could create a life for herself, but moving beyond this, there's evidence that Jewish sororities encouraged their members to invest in themselves. All of them did, after all, join sororities while in pursuit of a degree. The founders of the Jewish sorority Delta Phi Epsilon met as students at New York University Law School, and all of them went on to careers at a time when only a minority of women worked after marriage. Minna Goldsmith Mahler, for example, served as a United Nations observer, and Ida Bienstock Landau used her law degree to sue for the right to retain her American citizenship after marrying her Austrian husband in 1921. At that time, women who married foreigners lost their citizenship, and for Landau, that also meant her right to practice law. She succeeded in her suit, which led to the creation of the Cable Act of 1922, protecting the citizenship of all American women married to foreigners.

Even during the age of the so-called feminine mystique in the 1950s and early 1960s, Jewish sorority women promoted their commitment to strong and unconventional female role models who often defied the stay-at-home stereotype. In 1953, Delta Phi Epsilon instituted a "Person of the Year Award" and celebrated as its first recipient Anna Rosenberg, U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense who had recently defeated Senator Joseph McCarthy's attempts to smear her. By highlighting Rosenberg, the sorority showcased a liberal-leaning working woman as a role model. During the Cold War, when Jews were often under suspicion for their political affiliations, this public proclamation made a courageous statement. The Alpha Epsilon Phi sorority had previously instituted its own recognition program by offering honorary membership to women it considered inspirational; recipients included Hannah Solomon and Rebecca Kohut, founders of National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW), and Henrietta Szold, founder of Hadassah. Like Rosenberg, these honorees had not been sorority members, but they all valued education and activism as essential attributes of a Jewish woman.

The reasons for renewed interest in Jewish sororities today are the same ones articulated by the founders of these organizations a century ago.

While the Jewish sororities regularly highlighted their alumnae's involvement with Hadassah and NCJW in their magazines and drew connections between the Jewish sorority experience and post-collegiate participation in these women's organizations, the same connections were not reciprocated by the established women's groups. Even though both NCJW and Hadassah leadership and membership ranks were populated with alumnae of Jewish sororities, neither organization explicitly recognized the thread that initially bound these women together. By overlooking the Jewish sororities and their training of young Jewish women to assume active roles in their communities, it seems, looking back, that a membership-development opportunity was missed.

Senator Barbara Boxer and Lauren Weisberger, author of *The Devil Wears Prada*.

Given the numbers of women involved over the decades, why have historians and others who have studied community leadership dismissed or ignored the value of the Jewish sorority experience? In an era that saw the birth of both Jewish studies and women's studies (the 1960s and 1970s), it's understandable that emerging academics might have been reluctant to examine organizations viewed as snobby or antiquated. Joyce Antler, Professor of American Jewish History and Culture at Brandeis University, who has written extensively on Jewish women and feminism, suggests an alternative explanation for why scholars have bypassed Jewish sororities. Focusing on labor history, political history or religion, they have generally neglected youth culture and girls' culture.

And what about now? Why are Jewish sororities reasserting themselves as significant Jewish institutions on the college campus? Jill Finkelstein, active in Greek life at the University of Delaware from 2005–2009, suggests this is because a sorority provides a route to "sisterhood, social and service events... it makes [college] less overwhelming and easier to find your niche and a sense of community." Responding to the demand of Jewish women for a Jewish sorority at the University of California-Davis in 1998, Sigma Alpha Epsilon Pi was founded, and actively promotes itself as a "Jewish-interest" sorority on the 13 campuses where it now has chapters. Another local Jewish sorority at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill named itself Sigma Rho Lambda after the Jewish matriarchs, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah. According to a past advisor, Sheila Katz, the group is successful because "they explore many ways to be Jewish. Some students are connected through social justice, some through religion, some through a sense of peoplehood... being Jewish doesn't mean one thing."

Older and more established groups are now highlighting their "Jewishness" in ways previously unexplored. Alpha Epsilon Phi has partnered nationally with Hillel to create orientation activities for new students and jointly sponsored Shabbat services. Shoshanna Schechter Shaffin, Director of Hillel at Virginia Commonwealth University, a campus which has recently experienced a boost in Jewish campus involvement, sees a "clear correlation between a strong Jewish Greek life on campus and the overall 'rebirth' of Jewish life at VCU. Our Hillel numbers are literally doubling every year...The Hillel president is the president of Alpha Epsilon Phi."

In addition to renewed Jewish social activities, the Jewish sororities are engaging energetically in philanthropic and social action projects. "In addition to Jewish Women International," Sigma Delta Tau's Braly said, "our undergraduates also support 'Prevent Child Abuse America' and 'Women for Women International'. After working four years planning fundraising events and educating fellow students, she reported, "the missions of these [other] organizations—the empowerment of women and children—become part of their being." Alpha Epsilon Phi adopted as one of their philanthropic recipients Sharsheret, dedicated to increasing breast cancer awareness among young Jewish women and the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation, inspired by its founder, who had been a member of the sorority's University of Wisconsin chapter. Individual members of all of the Jewish sororities are also out-front and active in campus organizations as diverse as J-Street, AIPAC, independent campus minyanim, and Chabad, in addition to student government, environmental organizations and, importantly, feminist groups including *Vox* (Planned Parenthood) and Take Back the Night.

Similarly to those who sought membership in the past, many are from relatively affluent families—sorority dues for chapters with houses cost anywhere from $1,000–$2,500 a semester and cover both national and local dues, housing costs and for new members, initiation fees—but over 9,000 current students deem the Jewish sorority experience worth the investment. And the national sororities have scholarship funds available for members demonstrating academic achievement. Members say they feel their money isn't going to social attire for dances or buying friends, but to help women gain a foothold into the world of networking and leadership with tools that will help them succeed. Present's sorority experience taught her "how to be an effective communicator, how to work with people who hold diverse opinions and visions, and [gave her] on a national level, exposure to women doing great things in their fields."

Jewish sororities are trying hard to counter the negative portrayals in popular culture, like the self-obsessed taskmasters in the film "Sydney White" and the sorority archetypes (bulimic, bully, slut, etc.) described in Alexandra Robbins's 2004 bestselling expose *Pledged: The Secret Life of Sororities.* And while Jewish sorority women are easy targets for the derisive "JAP" stereotype, their commitment to social activism and female empowerment have helped to defuse such accusations. "Today Jewish sorority women are combating the JAP stereotype just as non-Jewish sorority women are combating that of the WASP." declared Wunsch of Alpha Epsilon Phi. As Ann Braly contends, "The old sorority stereotypes are ancient history." ■

Shira Kohn is Assistant Dean of the Graduate School at the Jewish Theological Seminary and co-editor, with Hasia Diner and Rachel Kranson, of A Jewish Feminine Mystique? Jewish Women in Postwar America.

GUIDING MY CHILD THROUGH CANCER

A Rabbi/Mom Shares the Rituals that Sustained both Mother and Daughter

BY ALLISON FLASH

For as long as I've been a rabbi, I've taught about ritual's psychological soundness and capacity to heal, but it wasn't until my daughter was diagnosed with Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma—four days before her twelfth birthday—that these lessons became deeply personal.

It was a hellish year. We had to keep Sara going—physically and emotionally—and we had to make sure our two younger children, Adam and Daniel, survived emotionally too. Sara was in the hospital for the better part of four months, her worst times being when maximal doses of narcotics didn't control her pain, when the physical isolation (because of compromised immunity) felt torturous to her, and when she feared what was coming next. Thankfully my parents were able to move in with us during the course of Sara's treatment; some days I would beseech my father, a retired physician, "Tell me it can't get worse."

I took a formal leave from my synagogue to be with Sara night and day, while my husband Ed worked and tended to the boys. Of course, my husband and I had to keep going emotionally, too, managing anxiety and pain, and remembering to turn towards sources of nurturance. Sometimes our work was comprised entirely just of this: remembering to turn towards nurturance.

Sara became a bat mitzvah last summer and my parents celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. It seems that we've all survived. Sara's in remission, but of course cancer hangs over us; this we negotiate daily. With time, finally, to catch my breath, I wanted to reflect more precisely on how Judaism—and ritual—got us through. What follows are the coping methods that worked best for us. We couldn't have made the journey without them—and some, indeed, still keep us going.

1 The *Mi Shebeirach* prayer, said in synagogue during the Torah service, is a prayer for healing, specifically for two kinds: "*refuat ha-nefesh u'refuat ha-guf*"—healing of the soul and of the body. There is no point in curing the body if, in the process, we destroy the soul. Judaism gives us clear and wise direction here.

From this prayer I knew that I had to figure out what it meant to heal Sara's "soul."

Early on in her treatment, I started talking with her about the fact that it was the doctors' job to cure her body, but it was my job as her mom to make sure that her soul stayed healthy. These were two different aspects of healing, I told her; you couldn't have one without the other. I made sure that Sara remembered that she was so much more than cancer: that she had vital interests (playing the flute, swimming, running cross-country) and vital friends—a lot of girls!—and that soon she'd be able to go to school again, take the bus home, and text her friends at all hours of the night. We recounted all the people who loved her and why. I didn't know how much of this idea—the two aspects of healing—she had really internalized until I heard from my friend that Sara had told her daughter, "The doctors take care of my body, but my mom takes care of my soul."

2 We are commanded to say 100 blessings daily. Although most Jews don't fulfill this tradition, it's a worthy benchmark, and I kept it in mind as Sara and I started a nightly ritual. I would help her recall at least one blessing from each day to thank God for, recognizing and honoring that there are always blessings in our lives, even when things are horrible. On difficult days Sara might give thanks for a fruit smoothie and the ability to keep it down. On somewhat less horrible days, she might give thanks for her girlfriend Hannah or Annie or Shea visiting her at the hospital, or for seeing our dog Henry or her friend Stephanie on video Skype.

After our statements of gratitude, we would always pray for a better tomorrow, like having her favorite nurse back on duty soon, having a particular procedure go well, or having the courage to make it through something medically challenging. "Our God and God of our mothers and fathers," I would say, "we are so grateful for _____. And we continue to pray for _____." Sara would say, "Amen."

I was conscious of never praying for something that couldn't happen, like being released from the hospital early or being cured immediately; I didn't want Sara to think her prayers were not answered. My daughter struggled to find a reason for her suffering, and these prayers recalibrated us and helped us stay oriented to hope.

We talked about how Judaism commands us to recognize and be thankful for what we have *before* we ask for more. Even now, after cancer, we continue this tradition of nightly mother-daughter prayer. If I'm busy with something else, Sara will come and get me. It continues to be a sacred time for the two of us, for what we've come through—and still go through—together.

3 We kept our gratitude for our community front and center. "*Al tifrosh min ha-tzeebor*" ["Don't go it alone without community"] our tradition commands us in *Ethics of the Fathers*. Besides my parents, my husband's and my siblings were constantly there for us, and our friends were, too; we knew they would not have allowed it to be otherwise. Generous people drove our boys to school, welcomed them into their homes, and brought us much-needed dinners. Technology was amazing as well, allowing us to feel the support of friends far away. Our synagogue "family" showed us what a *kehilla kedosha* [a holy community] can and should be, never questioning where I was needed first and rising to the challenge of covering my synagogue position in my absence.

> I told Sara it was the doctors' job to cure her body, but it was my job—as her mom—to make sure that her soul stayed healthy.

Who knew how indescribably sacred others' presence could feel? I wanted Sara to remember this.

4 Four rounds of chemotherapy loomed ahead of us, and we decided the count-down would feel more bearable if we could feel that others were counting with us. Judaism, indeed, teaches us to sanctify time. We decided on a quilt-making project—a quilt would comfort Sara and remind her of everyone's love. Each time we checked into the hospital we logged on to a website and asked friends to send us squares of fabric specifically color-coded for each round of chemo.

For the first round, Sara asked for brown squares, to symbolize the loss of her beautiful brown hair. We got dozens of squares in the mail, differently patterned fabrics with the predominance of browns, some overlaid with embroidery or text or drawings. The next round was blue—for calm. Then purple for strength, and, finally, spring colors for the upcoming season and to celebrate rebirth. Swatch by swatch, we were flooded by hundreds of pieces of fabric. It felt glorious.

At the end of treatment, a professional quilt-maker who didn't even know Sara, a neighbor of a family friend, gifted her with a king-size quilt. [You can see it at www.caringbridge.org/visit/saraflash.]

5 Sara and I talked about how to mark the end of her treatments. Each time she'd been admitted to the hospital, she'd gotten a wrist band, and she hadn't cut off any of them. We decided to invite the friends who had visited her during her ordeal to come to a "cutting-off-of-the-hospital-bands" ceremony at our house; it was also a celebration of Sara's health and a thank you to her friends for their kindnesses. Since our three children had always clamored for backyard blueberry bushes, we dug three big holes—it felt to me that each of our kids was a survivor of this period in their lives—for planting blueberry bushes.

When Sara's friends got to Sara's blueberry bush hole, they each cut off a hospital band and threw it in, lowered in the bush, and covered it all with soil. We prayed that as our plantings grew in strength and beauty, so too would Sara. When we go into the yard now, these bushes are there, reminders of time passing, of beauty coming from horror, of memory and of survival.

Needless to say, it feels good to see them thriving. ■

Rabbi Allison Flash lives in Newcastle, WA, with her husband and three children. She is the Assistant Director of Education at Temple Beth Am in Seattle.

Detail of art by Deidre Scherer. To see the full piece visit www.dscherer.com.

Mail-Order Bride
from Russia to the Dakota Prairie

FICTION BY ANNA SOLOMON

ODESSA, 188-

The physical inspection was first. Eyes. Nose. On her chin, a thumb opened her jaw. The woman's hands weren't soft but they were dry, at least, like salted fish. Minna closed her eyes, then worried she looked afraid and opened them. The fingers tugged at her earlobes. They prowled at her nape.

But now the woman ordered Minna to take everything off, and when Minna had stripped down to her underclothes, she ordered her to take these off, too. Minna felt dizzy. The room was unheated, in a basement, in a municipal building, after hours. The only color came from orange patches of rust on the walls.

The door opened. A man entered the room, followed by another woman, followed by a tall metal contraption she rolled behind her. She held a flame to it; gas flared; white light flooded the room. Minna's skin went taut. The lamp was the sort they brought to the mines after an accident, the sort they'd used when they pulled her father out. Its cold glare missed nothing. The stone floor was crumbling.

"Off," the woman said again.

The man waited, a pipe in his mouth. His beard was red and tattered, as if it housed moths. Maybe he was a real doctor. Maybe he wasn't. Minna chose to concentrate on his thin shoulders under his thin shirt, on how he kept his eyes on his fingernails, which he appeared to be cleaning with his thumbnails. He could almost look—if she looked right—apologetic.

She unknotted her bodice and folded it in half. She folded it again, then again, then set it on top of her other clothing, on the floor. Order, she thought, willing her arms not to shake. Show them order. A wife is meant to create order.

"Get on with it," said the woman. "Drawers."

The woman's breath was close, and sharp, like seawater crossed with wine. Minna fended off her desire to pull away. She would never, she told herself, have to smell this smell again. She would live across oceans, she would have a husband, she would have her own house. Her own sink and bath, made of zinc or copper—even stone would do—in which she could wash whatever and whenever she pleased.

Her eyes startled open when the fish hands cupped her breasts and lifted. At her stomach she felt a tickle: the man's beard. He drew so close he might have been sniffing her.

"You're sixteen?" he asked her navel.

Minna nodded.

"Your event comes every month, yes?"

She nodded again. Though sometimes she bled for a whole month straight, and sometimes not once in a year.

The tickle withdrew. "Arms," said the man as he sucked on his pipe, and as the smoke from his exhalation swam up Minna's front, smelling of her father, she couldn't help but breathe it in. The woman told her, "Lift," and started slipping her fingers around in Minna's underarms, pressing, kneading, turning sweat to ice. At last they stopped. Slipped away. The woman nodded.

"Unremarkable," said the man.

The woman who'd brought in the lamp scratched something in a large book.

Minna tried to blur her eyes. She focused instead on the pattern emerging: he questioned her, yes, but he did not command her, and he did not touch. There was a woman to perform these functions, and another to take notes. It was all part of a procedure, Minna reminded herself, a system. Rosenfeld's Bridal Service. An underground operation, yes—but the doctor, the women, they were all Jewish. Her jaw clenched as the hands grabbed her hips, but she did not squirm. It was a service, a system, run by Jews for Jews. There was nothing personal here. Nothing to squirm from. Every bride was given her Look. Usually by the groom's family, admittedly—but so many families had already left. Perhaps it was better this way. She'd never have to see these people again. There was a method; there were rules; there was a prize.

SOUTH DAKOTA

It was hard to tell, at first, whether Max was unnaturally tall or the doorway was unnaturally short. He stood as he did in the picture—the real picture, that was, undistorted by Minna's more optimistic contrivances: hands empty by his sides, feet pointed out, knees locked. His beard was not trimmed in any style; it was simply hair, covering much of his face.

Minna didn't move. This had been her last chance—her arrival. She'd come so far. Now she was here. And that was him.

For a man standing in front of his own house, he looked nervous; he wore a caught, wincing smile, as if he would like to somehow rearrange himself but feared seeming indecisive. When he spoke, his voice was passably deep but crumbly, like a dough rolled too thin.

"Minna." He looked at her hand, which she had forgotten to hold out. Then, shyly, he took it in his own, and said, to her horror, "My love."

Minna almost jerked away. She was embarrassed for Max even more than for herself. He was not young enough to be naive—where had he learned to expose himself in such a way? He could not love her, of course. He'd just met her. And besides, who used that word out loud? Only poor people could marry for love. Minna tasted the salt of rising tears. She was determined, she was desperate, not to fall apart. She thought, *At least his fingers are soft—at least they're not a poor man's fingers*. She ignored the fact that his grip was like wet paper. She ignored what soft hands might say about a farmer. Maybe, she thought, he meant "love" simply as an indicator of fact—the fact of the situation between a husband and his wife-to-be. Like one might look at a bolt of cloth at market and say, out loud, *muslin*, just to have said it.

She took a deep breath. "Hello, Max," she said.

"Please. Call me Motke."

Her father, Minna realized, had been younger than Max was now.

The night blared its excruciating silence. Then a groan broke through: Minna's stomach, announcing hunger. She waited for her face to burn, for her mouth to say *zayt moykhl*—yet neither happened. She couldn't locate any desire to impress Max. Instead a belligerence welled up in her. She took the bundle from Jacob and turned to Max. "They told you I would arrive with luggage? You thought I was rich?"

ART BY NOGA GREENBERG, BEZALEL ACADEMY, JERUSALEM

"No. If you were rich, you wouldn't come here."

"What did they tell you?"

"Almost nothing."

Minna was suddenly sorry. But this wasn't remorse, or even pity. It was closer, perhaps, to sorrow. She wondered if Max was as disappointed by her youth as she was by his age. She wondered with what money he'd paid for her crossing. And the Rosenfeld's examination? Did he have any idea what he'd paid for? She tried to find his eyes in the dark, then thought it better that she couldn't.

"Then we are even," she said.

Max's outline seemed to melt slightly. He turned. She could see his lips now: thick for a man, and alarmingly pink. "This is a discussion for another time," he said. "You are hungry. My love."

Inside, the house—the room—felt even smaller than it looked, the scale almost miniature, as if built for dwarves. There was a short table. Three shipping crates for chairs. One bed, a small stove, a bench lined with buckets. The floor was dirt, the walls were dirt. In one corner, a hole had been dug out: here she saw, emerging from a blanket, curly black hair. Samuel, asleep. Or pretending to sleep, she thought. More likely he just didn't want to meet her. Which was fine. Minna did not particularly want to meet him. It was enough, for one night, to meet a husband. Better to leave something still unknown—though she wished, instead of a stepson, that it might be a second room. The air smelled of breath and smoke, and something richer, ranker— a pile of horse dung, she saw, by the stove. Their fuel, she realized.

"Please," said Max, and handed her a steaming plate.

What kind of meat she'd been served, Minna couldn't tell, but it tasted sweet and was warm. When she offered some to Jacob, he looked to his father, then shook his head. She didn't offer again. She felt greedy and light, and though the baseness of her hunger disturbed her, along with the baser baseness of how simple it was to ease, she had a sense that her future called for a certain hoarding, and ate the rest without stopping even to say thank you.

The men were gone. Minna felt it before she saw. An earthen stillness in the room. She rolled over. The only window looked like it might have been a mistake: a snag of light near the door, white as a rag. If she faced away she could almost be in her attic in Odessa. If not for the smell of dung. If not for the uncovered straw beneath her, or the knowledge that in this room, this plank bed was the trophy. Last night, before laying himself down in the hole with his sons, Max had lowered his eyes and said, "You'll have the bed."

She'd been full with meat, and sleepy, and glad to be left alone. She was glad for it now. Still, there was a flatness in her chest, as if she were trapped beneath a pane of storefront glass. She thought of the eggbeater in Galina's kitchen. She thought: I should have taken it. I should have taken the eggbeater and the good spatula and the good knife. I should have taken as much as I could carry.

The door was lighter than her hand expected, made of broken-down crates, and opened too quickly: the sky was fierce in its light. She stumbled out squinting; seeing no one, hearing nothing, she squatted to pee. Then haltingly, warily, she blinked her way to vision. She couldn't believe, at first, that her eyes were working properly, for there was nothing to see but grass, the same infinite monotony they'd ridden through on the train. Minna turned to face the house and saw that it was built into

ART BY NOGA GREENBERG, BEZALEL ACADEMY JERUSALEM

the side of a short hill. It was, she realized, more of a cave than a house. She circled around to the other side, where there was no wall or door; if it weren't for the little tin chimney poking out, the hill would look like nothing more than a hill. So that must have been where Max had stood for the photograph. He'd appeared to be standing in front of nothing but sky because he was. There might be nothing for miles as tall as this meager hill they called a house. She thought of the brick house on Beltsy's square, and remembered its secret: there wasn't a single brick. It was a wood house, like all the others, glued over with tin plate and painted to look like brick. A trick—empty as the magician's rings. And everyone had gone around adoring it.

She raised an arm to shade her eyes. Behind the hill stood a tree, and tied to the tree, like a horse, stood a cow. Near the cow was a small kitchen garden, a few feet across, and a little roof, under which six or so chickens dozed on their nests. The cow was thin, her udders like raindrops about to split from an eave.

This was the yard, then. Minna lifted her eyes slowly, uncertain she wanted to see beyond. But there was a field, a small field yet real, a real field plowed and planted with a respectable crop of wheat. It was something, she thought. Next year—she dared think it, Next Year, and was proud, for she'd made a promise of her own accord, or as close as she'd ever come to her own accord—Next Year there would be more. More rows, more crops, more food, more money. Minna could picture the order of it, the bounty. She could see fields running to the horizon.

Then she saw more clearly through the sun's glare: the wheat wasn't right. The seeds had fallen off; the stems were bent and tangled; in some patches they were lying down, all in one direction, as if they'd been flattened by an impossibly massive wheel. Minna was conscious, suddenly, of the air at her back. She was alone, not as she'd been in her father's house, or in Galina's attic, but an alone that made her afraid to move in case she'd find herself gone.

At the edges of the ruined field, there were rocks, piled into little mountains. Past these, a long, lopsided swath of dark soil had been turned up but not yet planted. It was nearly September. Hardly time to break new ground. Even Minna, who'd done little more than weed her father's vegetable patch, knew this. Yet there, at the far boundary of the plowed earth, Minna spotted the horse and mule, and three figures, digging up more rocks.

Minna shuddered, a chill through her bones of too much sun too fast. Her ears buzzed, but she could see no insects. Her eyes watered. She closed them, opened them again. And there, way off, so sudden in her vision that they seemed to have grown just for her, was a line of tall, broad-limbed trees, their branches heavy with leaves, following the path of a small creek. She felt a dazzling relief. An exaggerated dazzle, perhaps; even so, she let it wash over her. She thought: I grew up among trees, in the forest. And maybe that, too, wasn't fully honest, since Minna had grown up on the edge of the forest, or more accurately at the edge of the town. But she was desperate for the story to cohere. It depended, she decided, on which way you faced, and Minna's father had preferred to face away from the town and toward the forest and Minna had been his daughter and son and done the same. Yes. Minna and her father would eat their supper facing the forest, sitting in silence, side by side, watching until the birds disappeared into the trees and the trees disappeared into the night.

Minna remembered thinking of their watching as a form of guardianship, a supervision of the most natural and necessary sort—as if without her and her father, the trees would never rest. But now she realized she'd been wrong. Standing in the dry air under the hot sun on the hill that was the cave that was now her house, she thought it hadn't been the trees that needed protecting,

There might be nothing for miles. She was alone, an alone that made her afraid to move, in case she'd find herself gone.

but her and her father who'd needed the trees. To see everything all at once, sky whole, horizon whole, sun whole, was punishing. It seemed to suggest that there was nothing else to know.

The method, Minna thought, was not all that it could be. There was a link missing somewhere, a faulty assumption, a confusion of priority. The horse and mule barely worked. They stood at the edge of the dirt, looking smug, facing all the grass that hadn't been turned over. There was so much grass, growing so brazenly to the horizon, that the farm—the yard and the field and the newly turned soil, even the trees—appeared to be little more than a blemish. Beyond the grass, apparently, was a country, but it couldn't be seen from where Minna stood.

Back in the dark of the cave, she could barely see. She sipped from the smallest bucket, hoping it was the clean one, and when the water tasted of nothing worse than wood, she gulped it down. She sat on one of the boxes until her vision returned, then covered her eyes with her hands. Her hands smelled familiar. Blood pounded in her neck. *Breathe.* She calmed herself in the urgent, giddy way one does when the only other choice is panic. Then she spread one finger at a time, revealing the room in stripes so narrow she could almost pretend that it wasn't real. Line of board. Slice of blackened iron. There was a clean edge of light. Half a candlestick, curves like knuckles. A scrap of white—

Minna was up, moving toward it, her fingers on the fringe before she realized that it was just the corner of a folded prayer shawl. She stepped back, embarrassed. What had she imagined it might be? A note from her predecessor, offering advice? A piece of lace? Proof, simply, that another woman had existed here? Ridiculous, the very thought—Max's wife had lasted only two days, barely long enough to see the "house" dug let alone to leave behind a souvenir—yet Minna couldn't stop herself. She looked under the pillow on the bed, lifted up the blankets in the hole. She peered behind the stove. In one corner was a box with a few shirts, all men's, all threadbare, the pockets ripping loose. She felt the edge of the table, the undersides—there was no drawer. She opened a sack and found potatoes, opened another and found an inch of flour. In a small tin there were coffee beans; next to the coffee beans was a small stack of magazines which looked to be primers on farming. Under the shawl were two stacks of dishes and tins, a prayer book, a pair of leather boxes—Max's *tefillin*— and

a possibly dead cricket. Minna laid a finger on its back, easily crushed it, then pulled down the prayer book, which she gripped by the cover and shook. When nothing came loose, she shook harder. Finally a sheaf of paper dropped out and she knelt down to look. But it was only a section of the book, broken off by her assault. She tried to shove it back into place, then realized she was grinding the whole book into the dirt. She yanked it up and the pages fell out again. In the synagogue, she remembered, when a book so much as touched a bench, the women cradled and kissed it. But in Minna's rush to pick up the pages, she tore one, and in the seconds that followed, which felt like hours, as the letters grew blacker and more accusing, she decided it would be easier to bury the page than fix it. She started to dig. That the floor was dirt suddenly seemed a blessing.

If you were careful, her father said, *you could make a decent seamstress. That would keep you. That would be a decent way to live.*

But no. Never careful. Worse than your mother.

Minna grew aware of herself, scratching like a rat. A shadow had tilted into the room: tall, but not Max. Taller than Max, and with longer arms. But these arms weren't skinny, and they ended in fists. Minna squinted, trying to make out his eyes, then realized she must look mad. She grabbed the prayer book off the ground and opened it as if to read. He might leave, she thought, and pretend he hadn't seen her. He might laugh. But he did neither. He stepped closer and squatted down, and now his face came into view: long and sharp-jawed and rough with black stubble. He was better-looking than Jacob, yes, even handsome, yet somehow difficult to look at. Hard. Or maybe Minna couldn't look at him because he was looking at her as through a nearly gone piece of soap—as if he was seeing fear and sin and bone all splayed out, and this confusion that he'd caused in her fingers and toes, a tingling close to pain.

She closed the book. "Don't just watch me, then."

His hand reached toward her—warm from its fist. "Samuel," he said.

"Yes." She slipped free. "I deduced that."

"Are you all right?"

Minna stood. She felt dangerously tempted to answer him honestly. A sudden longing to talk and talk. But the grass, she would say, but the light, but this was not what I expected. But what did she expect?

She dusted off the book with her skirt, turning so he couldn't see her face. "You won't…" She stopped.

"No." Samuel rose from his squat. Again he reached his hand toward her. Minna mistrusted him suddenly—not that he wouldn't keep her secret but that he would keep it out of kindness. His curls stood in jagged chunks around his head, yet somehow they didn't look silly; they seemed to be watching her, like his eyes, for another misstep. Which might include, she thought, her taking his hand again. Then he was saying, "What? You want to keep it?" and Minna realized that he was looking at the book. He only wanted her to give him the book. She felt relief as she handed it back, then a stab of injury as she watched him place it on the shelf. His movements were efficient, his back straight. She couldn't tell if he cared about the book itself, and the words within, or just the fact that she'd been desecrating it. When he turned again, his expression was as illegible as at first.

"Is there anything you need?" he asked.

She wanted to cry.

"To prepare dinner I mean." He spoke gently. "Is there anything you need. I've been the cook, up until now."

Minna straightened. It was simple, she told herself. A simple question. All he wanted was a simple answer. She brushed her dirty hands against each other, set them on her hips, and swallowed. "What do I cook?"

"That's easy," Samuel said. "There are few options. A pancake out of potatoes, a pancake out of flour. There's butter made last week, in the well"—he pointed at a board on the floor—"and milk from this morning. If there are extra eggs, eggs."

"And meat?" she asked.

"We're waiting a shipment. The nearest kosher butcher is at Sioux Falls. He'll come through in a couple weeks. Maybe."

"What I ate last night, that was the last?"

"Only the best, for the bride."

Minna inspected his face carefully, trying to find a hint of venom, but he had nothing of Jacob's soft cheeks or Max's nervous eyes, only a self-sufficiency that was beginning to anger her. And the word *bride* from that perfectly symmetrical mouth. She no longer wanted to cry, she wanted to hit him, this older boy who would be her stepson, who seemed decent, almost gracious, yet also calculating, who made her feel nervous as a hare. She was not used to wanting a person to like her.

She worked to keep her voice steady. "When do you eat?"

"When there's food ready."

"I'll call for you, then."

"You might try shouting." For an instant Samuel looked possibly, vaguely, amused. Then he turned to go.

"I can shout," Minna blurted.

Samuel grabbed the top of the door frame and stopped. He kept his back to her—an affected pose, she thought, meant to make him look like a man. She chose to ignore the fact that it succeeded. "Is there a rake?" she asked.

"A species of one. What for?"

"The ruined wheat. I thought I'd use it to make a fire that didn't stink of shit."

"Ah. You're blunt. And you can shout. Yet you haven't asked what happened to the field."

"I didn't think it mattered. It's done."

Samuel released the door frame, let his arms fall to his sides, and breathed out a long, weary sigh—the kind of man's sigh Minna couldn't help but feel she'd caused.

"I'm sorry," she said.

Samuel stepped out into the sun. "The rake's behind the chicken house. But remember," he said, turning to face her, and she saw a crack now in his facade, the way the deepest cracks appear only in the brightest light. She saw, for an instant, how utterly unhappy he was. Then he smiled—her first glimpse of his strong, white teeth—and said brightly, "When the wheat won't make fire, it's not your fault." ■

Anna Solomon's short stories have twice been awarded the Pushcart Prize. This piece is from her new novel, The Little Bride, *reprinted by arrangement with Riverhead Books, a member of Penguin Group (USA), Inc.* *Copyright © 2011 by Anna Solomon.*

A WOMAN'S VIEW OF

"ISAAC'S CIRCUMCISION", REGENSBURG PENTATEUCH, C1300. PHOTO BY CHEISSOOVI FROM WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

CIRCUMCISION

BY ELANA MARYLES SZTOKMAN

Circumcision isn't my thing. I mean, literally. As a woman, I lack the proper anatomy parts to be able to experience this particular rite of passage on my own body. Although circumcision is necessarily outside my physical being, as a member of the tribe, I am meant to consider ritual circumcision—the "bris" or *brit milah*—a spiritually significant component of my Jewish identity (though precisely whose departed foreskin is meant to provide me with my Jewishness is not entirely clear). So the recent brouhaha over a proposed circumcision ban in San Francisco raised a lot of powerful issues for me, highlighting my ongoing internal battle of allegiances between feminism and Judaism.

My feminist self has always felt awkward about circumcision. So much of our liturgy refers to the centrality of the bris—literally "the Covenant"—like the Grace After Meals, in which we thank God for "the Covenant that you engraved in our flesh." When I read this, and chant it aloud, I shudder with the ongoing reminder about how excluded I am as a woman. This prayer assumes that only men are reciting it, that "our" flesh is the community of men who are the primary owners and recipients of the heritage. Years ago I read a commentary on this passage suggesting that women become part of this collective entity when we are married, experiencing bris vicariously through our husbands. This just adds insult to injury. I am not only ignored, but also rendered invisible, reminded that the correct state of my being is hidden behind a man. Judith Plaskow describes this in *Standing Again at Sinai*: "When God enters into a covenant with Abraham and says to him, 'This is my covenant which you shall keep, between me and you and your descendants after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised' (Gen. 17:10), women can hear this only as establishing our marginality."

Bris has a way of erasing the lives of women from the moment we are born. The bris ceremony becomes a major celebration of a boy's birth, leaving the arrival of a girl ritualistically unnoticed, except in certain Sephardic communities, where there is a centuries-old tradition of honoring the birth of a Jewish daughter. The past generation or two of women have sought to fill in that void, but it's still an uphill battle. Some expectant grandparents, for example, still wait to make appropriate travel plans based on gender—for a boy, of course they will attend the bris, but for "just" a girl they might not rush to make the trip. In an adult course on the Jewish lifecycle I once taught, I had to use a curriculum with the following chapter titles: "Bris, Bar/Bat mitzvah, Wedding, Death." The educators seemed to lack any awareness that there's more to a birth than the bris. This classic vision of the Jewish lifecycle, emphasizing the bris as the quintessential moment of birth, practically ignores the existence of girl babies and the experiences of women. This dismisses the entire experience of childbirth, as if to say we're not really celebrating new life—we're celebrating a new set of male genitals for the Chosen People. Howard Eilberg-Schwartz has written that "Since circumcision binds men between and across generations, it also establishes an opposition between men and women"

A little blood in exchange for an eternity of identity and belonging? Not such a bad deal.

My Judaism makes other points. My objections as a thinking woman notwithstanding, there have been moments in my life when I have pushed aside my feminist consciousness and taken a more passive approach towards accepting Jewish tradition. When my son was born, I found myself having nagging thoughts that I ultimately put away in a drawer in my mind, the most recurrent among them: "We're doing *what* to his body?!" This thought was indirectly validated at the bris by my mother, who made sure that I followed her family's tradition of not allowing the mother anywhere near the baby during the ritual. She kept pushing me to the back of the hall, and even wanted me to be in a separate room. She couldn't exactly say to me, "Generations of mothers have been horrified by this custom," but that secret knowledge was there.

Of course we did the bris anyway. Not doing it was not an option. If 3,000 years' worth of Jews were doing this, I felt too small to pass on it. I still do. It was that voice in my head saying, *This is really important*. I am a Jew. My grandfathers did this, as did their grandfathers. Jews risked their lives in the Holocaust and in the Inquisition and under Hellenism to make sure that they could do this, and who am I to kvetch about it? The grandiosity of "entering the Covenant" felt too huge for me to question for my son. A little blood in exchange for an eternity of belonging and identity? Not such a bad deal.

It is hard to articulate a rational explanation for this practice of making our babies bleed, beyond "That's what we've always done," and I know how weak an argument that is. Even Harry Brod, noted professor and scholar of masculinities, in an article entitled, "Circumcision and the Erection of Patriarchy," wrote: "For many Jews, the circumcised penis is the defining mark of being a Jew.... [T]he idea that circumcision confers Jewish identity has a deep and powerful hold on many Jews, even those not otherwise particularly observant." Even opponents of patriarchy are reluctant to oppose a tradition that seems so essential.

Still, the recent events surrounding the circumcision ban proposed in San Francisco took me back 16 years to those moments of doubt. Some of the opponents' points resonate with me, such as those of "Mothers against Circumcision," who claim that that one out of every 500 circumcisions goes wrong, that the foreskin is essential for sexual fulfillment, and—mostly—that it's immoral to alter your child's anatomy permanently for no particularly good reason especially when the child cannot voice an opinion. On a website called "Beyond the Bris," 21-year old Shea Levy wrote a blog post, "To the Mohel who cut me:" "Almost every single day, for as long as I can remember, I have at one point or another felt discomfort in the tip of my penis....The permanently uncovered portions of my glans are calloused.... The area underneath the folded shaft skin that remains regularly collects dust, lint, and other foreign particles... I am not capable of the same level and variety of physical pleasure that would have been available to me had I been left intact.... Sexual activity causes more friction than it should."

But I've asked some circumcised men how they feel about this essay, and many disagree. "Dust, lint and other foreign particles?" one man replied. "Seriously?" Indeed, a survey of some of the research indicates that infant circumcision gives 100% protection against cancer of the penis, prevents a common inflammation of the glans called balanitis, makes urinary tract infections 10 times less likely in babies, reduces the incidence of cervical cancer by 20% in sexual partners and makes men eight times less likely to contract the HIV virus.

While these points are being argued across the blogosphere, the proposed San Francisco measure, with a $1,000 fine and

one-year prison term for the performance of circumcisions on males under 18, seems extreme. Worse, the language of violence and hatred among its staunchest proponents are more troubling than the debate over infections or sexual pleasure. Some of the language surrounding the ban smacks of anti-Semitism. In particular, the comic book *Foreskin Man*, with its "Monster Mohel" character, has some profoundly disturbing echoes of the Elders of Zion. It was created by Matthew Hess, president of the MGM Bill organization that proposed the ballot measure. (MGM stands for "male genital mutilation.") The comic book stars a blond, Aryan-looking caped superhero whose mission is to save baby boys from the sharp knife of the gnarled, beady-eyed, hook-nosed, grimy-looking, black-clad mohel. I agree with the Anti-Defamation League statement that the comic book has "identifiably Orthodox Jewish characters as evil villains, [who are] disrespectful and deeply offensive... This is an advocacy campaign taken to a new low. No matter what one's personal opinions of male circumcision, it is irresponsible to use stereotypical caricatures of religious Jews to promote the anti-circumcision agenda."

It is easy to see this proposed bris ban in light of the narrative of Jewish oppression. As the Jerusalem Post noted in an editorial, "Opposition to *brit mila* dates back to ancient times. The Romans were particularly hostile to the practice before and after the destruction of the Second Temple. It was seen by the pagan Romans as an attack on the Hellenistic adoration of nature, considered perfect and a reflection of the will of the gods." As much as it's hard to explain why bris is so important for Jews, it's even harder to explain why the practice brings out such hatred among its opponents. It is irrational anti-Semitism rearing its ugly head in the strangest of places—surrounding the genitals of Jewish men.

The politics of such rituals? Really, all this excitement about the phallus. How Freudian, I suppose. Still, in attempting to avoid the obvious—that this is just another story about men and their masculinity, because hasn't every culture in the history of humanity had this obsession in one form or another?— I wanted to first try and understand why this is so important to Jews. If God wanted us to have a sign of the covenant, He could have asked for something more benign—a gold necklace, a red dot on the forehead, or perhaps dyeing our hair green over the ears. Even a small tattoo seems better than this (though ironically, tattooing is against the Torah but somehow this isn't, which is hard to fathom). Although, to be fair, I think about the Maoris with their facial tattoos and some African tribes with piercings and neck-chokers, and suddenly circumcision doesn't seem so bad. But these thoughts do remind me that the entire practice is primal, a marking on the skin in the most intimate of places to identify allegiance.

In order to gain some insights into the meaning of this ritual for practicing Jews, I did what any self-respecting researcher in the year 2011 would do: I went to crowdsourcing. I asked my Facebook friends and listserv groups how they understand bris. One friend cited Genesis, saying that circumcision is meant to ensure that all progeny emerging from this organ be part of the covenant. This blunt statement exacerbates all my feelings of exclusion—especially considering women's roles in producing these progeny. In the days of Abraham, added another friend, men made pacts by holding one another's crotch—like swearing on one's descendants. Seen this way, the penis is just a very significant part of how men communicate important ideas, apparently.

Among the other responses I received:

• "We are asserting our identification with G-d and our commitment to use our entire bodies for great purposes." That's beautiful, but I could have made a mark on my elbow or ear for the same effect. In fact, one might argue that marking a body part that is not often seen in public (urinals and locker rooms notwithstanding) is not the best way to send a strong message of identification.

• Maimonides wrote that circumcision is about "the wish to bring about a decrease in sexual intercourse and a weakening of the organ in question, so that this activity be diminished and the organ be in as quiet a state as possible."

• "It is a foundation of Judaism that we are to control our animal desires and direct them into spiritual pursuits. Nowhere does a person have more potential for expressing 'barbaric' behavior

Characters from the deeply offensive 2011 comic *Foreskin Man*, by Matthew Hess.

than in the sex drive." Another friend quoted a related passage from the *Sefer Ha-hinuch*: "To remind him that just as he perfects his body, so to must he perfect his soul through his actions."

Athena Gorospe, in *Narrative and Identity*, expounds on this idea around the biblical concept of "circumcision of the heart" (Deut 10:16). "A circumcised heart is associated with the 'loosening of the neck'…to remove the 'hardness' that keeps a person's emotions, desires, mind, and will from fully surrendering to Yahweh. It is to make the heart 'the organ of commitment' more sensitive and responsive to God….Physically, to circumcise is…. to uncover the sheath and expose the organ so that it becomes more sensitive and responsive to touch… to remove anything that hinders the person from being sensitive and responsive to the divine will." Although the reminder that we all need to be working on self-improvement and developing compassion and sensitivity towards the other is one of the Jewish world views that I most love and connect to, ideas that the male body needs to be curtailed and even "perfected," that sex is by nature barbaric, and that all our desires need to be restrained, raise some difficult theological and moral questions. And, ironically, it confirms the assertion by proponents of the ban that this procedure is bad for men's sex lives.

In the days of Abraham, men made pacts by holding one another's crotch—like swearing on one's descendents.

Opponents of circumcision put forth some flimsier ideas. Graphic artist Hess, who wrote the San Francisco ballot language, called it a "double standard," that cutting the genitals of girls is illegal but cutting the foreskin off boys is acceptable. I find this argument to be an affront to women who have endured female genital mutilation. As Ayaan Hirsi Ali so painfully recalls in her book *Infidel*, female genital mutilation removes sexual satisfaction, routinely causes some extreme, life-threatening health problems, and severely oppresses women by attempting to make them docile, subservient and asexual. Male circumcision does none of those things, and for the most part has little impact, if any, on a man's life. Even blogger Shea Levy's suffering cannot even begin to compare to Hirsi Ali's. Indeed, feminists have a huge issue with calling female genital cutting "female circumcision," because it suggests that it's as painless, normal, and beneficial, as male circumcision, which it is not.

Proponents of the San Francisco ban argue that parents should not be allowed to force a decision on a young male child. One can sympathize with this idea in principle, but parents make many other seemingly odd decisions about a child's body without first getting consent—including vaccinations, ear-piercing, and even leashes and restraining straps. While I believe that we need to give our children as much freedom as possible, this is not an absolute practice and needs to be weighed against other factors. Indeed, male circumcision done later in life, whether for health or religious reasons, is much more painful than having the procedure as a baby.

But there seems to be more than logic behind the efforts at banning circumcision of baby boys. Jena Troutman, the Santa Monica woman who submitted a similar proposal for her city but then withdrew it, stated this entire position with some strange ideas and overt hostility. She reportedly told Fox News, "I don't have the time or the energy to argue with everybody, but

A Vindication of the Rites of Penises?

Lilith editors discussed circumcision recently in a podcast with editors at the Forward newspaper. A few highlights:

Susan Weidman Schneider: There has been so much uneasiness about male circumcision, even among Jews who end up circumcising their baby boys. On the one hand, it's an important part of the tradition and also part of what ultimately, they feel, is going to make that child look like his father. We're attached to it. But on the other hand, we're repelled, frightened and alarmed, and probably have been since time immemorial.

Susan Schnur: I did my doctoral dissertation on college hazing, which was about men's initiation rites. This is an initiation of boys into the fraternity of Judaism. Initiation rites are always embodied, there's always an ordeal, and there's often scarification. Circumcision is a mutilation; that's part of its power. If you were a Christian looking at the centrality for Jews of this rite, you'd register the stunning atavism—that's why it's so potent. As for females, we were invisible. We know this because circumcision is an entry into a fraternity that we never have to get. Women "tend and befriend," as the anthropologists say. We don't have to know that we've entered the club of men and that we won't be kicked out. That's what these rituals are about, a very primitive, very absolute entry into a world. In terms of people's ambivalence, the atavism here speaks to something beyond mores and socialization, so it's seductive. It's frightening to keep it, and it's frightening to give it up.

Listen to full podcast at www.Lilith.org/listen.htm

you shouldn't go around cutting up your little babies. Why don't people [expletive] get that? For me, this was never about religion. It was about protecting babies from their parents not knowing that circumcision was started in America to end masturbation." Huh? This diatribe alone makes me want to join the other side.

Meanwhile, supporters of circumcision, which include a mixed group of Jews and Muslims, successfully petitioned the San Francisco court, which ruled in July that the measure violates freedom of religion, although this ruling will most likely be appealed.

While I continue to be troubled by new and creative manifestations of anti-Semitism, the truth is, I'm still not really sure how I feel about the bris. This entire series of events mostly makes me wonder about the centrality of masculinity in our cultures—Jewish and Western. It feels like this entire story is a kind of male turf war, a battle over whose penis is superior. It's as if the uncircumcised penis is as much of a threat to Jewish identity as the circumcised penis is to Gentiles. It reminds me of an incident recently recounted to me which occurred in Canada a few decades ago, when a European-born non-Jewish man discovered that he had inadvertently given permission for his newborn son to be circumcised by doctors in the hospital. He burst into the ward threatening to kill the medical staff, screaming hysterically, "You made my son a Jew!"

Howard Eilberg-Schwartz wrote in 1995 that "[I]t is time to find a different symbol of a boy's entrance into the community. Instead of cutting our sons, we might celebrate their masculinity. A more appropriate symbol would be a nurturing act, one that would affirm a boy's relationship to a loving father, both his own and that of his God. We might, for example, feed our sons, since a meal is also a traditional symbol of covenant....Feeding our sons, rather than wounding them, would be a symbol of our nurturing relationship to them."

Circumcision is in many ways about men defining their own Jewishness. There is also an anti-Semitic backlash, profound hatred for that Jewish male assertion of masculinity. Symbolically, the penis is ultimately about male power, and the fight over the circumcision ban is just another manifestation of that male struggle.

As much as we should defend the rights of the Jewish people to maintain an ancient culture, we should also defend the rights of Jews to form alternative rituals, especially ones that reflect the compassion and inclusivity that should be at the heart of Jewish life. And as an added "bonus," a non-phallic ritual for bringing our children into the Jewish Covenant would welcome both boys and girls as equal members of the Jewish people, from the moment they are born. ■

Elana Maryles Sztokman is the author of the forthcoming The Men's Section: Orthodox Jewish Men in an Egalitarian World, *to be released in November by the Hadassah Brandeis Institute, and is a contributing writer at The Forward Sisterhood blog.*

FROM THE ARCHIVE:
"Circumcision: The Power of the Tribe," by David Kotzen-Reich, Winter 1992
"When the Mohel Is a Woman," by Ilana Trachtman with Sarah Blustain, Spring 1999
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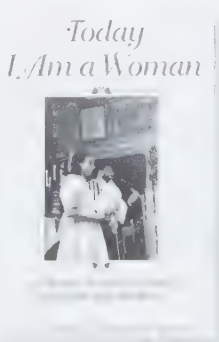

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REVIEWS

Demystifying the Mystique

Betty Friedan in the 21st century

Marrying the skills of the sociologist and the historian, **Stephanie Coontz** gives us a "biography of a book" in ***A Strange Stirring: The Feminine Mystique and American Women at the Dawn of the 1960s*** (Basic Books, $25.95). Enriched by her own data and interviews, Coontz cuts through the fog that has surrounded *The Feminine Mystique* since its publication in 1963 and places Betty Friedan's analytical breakthrough in its historical context.

When Friedan asked, "Are Women People?" this was not a rhetorical question. "Freudian understanding of sexual difference permeated popular culture," Coontz observes. One best-selling pundit warned that boys and girls could not grow into psychologically healthy adults if they were raised "not primarily as male and female, but as people." In the white middle-class world in which Friedan lived, it was a truism that female independence was bad for husbands and children and that when a wife worked for wages it was a public confession of her husband's failure to provide.

It was a truism that female independence was bad for husbands and children.

The destructive double-bind in which white middle-class women found themselves was harnessed by advertisers; Friedan names this—in a chapter that has not lost its force—"The Sexual Sell." "What matters," her own literary agent told Coontz, "is that women were asked to deny what they were feeling."

Coontz is shrewd in noting Friedan's limitations. Friedan did not acknowledge her intellectual debts. She gave short shrift to domestic work and domestic workers. She did not call for a grassroots movement or for legal change, even though she herself had worked for the left-wing electrical workers union. Even at the time, writer Gerda Lerner—who would become a leading feminist historian—criticized Friedan for her failure to address the economic discrimination faced by "working women, especially Negro women," who lacked access to college, child care and maternity benefits. This failure is ironic, for, as Coontz writes, "It was black activists, not white feminists, who first referred to women and men as 'co-breadwinners'." Upper middle-class black women, though not immune to the pressures of the Feminine Mystique, did not give up their jobs and professions; roughly twice as many of them held outside jobs as their white counterparts. "Black middle-class wives, not white feminists, were the true pioneers of modern family patterns."

Coontz would have strengthened our understanding of feminism even more if she had also recognized the strong Jewish tradition for women to work "beyond the gates of her household." For all the ambivalence that many upwardly mobile Jewish families felt about this tradition in the 1950s, it was there to be drawn upon by the many Jewish women who played leading roles in the movement, not least Friedan herself.

In the end, Coontz seeks to name the mystique of our own time. Now that women are solidly in the work force, the barriers they face come not at the point of entry but at the point of motherhood. She calls for our energies to be spent on the reconfiguration of fatherhood, quite properly sneering at the language of "juggling" work and family. Middle-class women still need what working women have always needed: decent pay, reliable health care, maternity benefits, child care and financial security. We must reconfigure our social order to be more humane, and that takes political action.

LINDA K. KERBER *is professor of history at the University of Iowa.*

Orthodox Lesbians

Searching for a livable compromise

The contributors to the anthology ***Keep Your Wives Away from Them: Orthodox Women, Unorthodox Desires*** struggle to find a livable compromise between traditional Judaism and an openly lesbian life.

Edited by **Miryam Kabakov** (North Atlantic Books, $16.95), the book's primary draw comes from the dozen personal essays that make up its bulk. Some are joyful: Tamar Prager describes her traditional two-bride wedding attended by her whole family [featured in Lilith in 2006]; Mara Benjamin finds true love during a rooftop study session. But Ex-Yeshiva Girl finds only partial acceptance from her family, while Geo Bloom in "You Lose These…" suggests a possibly suicidal outcome for her protagonist in her riff on Joyce's *Ulysses*. Still others are focused on gender rather than sexuality, such as Sasha Goldberg's wistful and funny tale of unintentionally changing genders in Jerusalem, or Yeshiva University professor Joy Ladin's equally funny and far more arduous transition from male to female on the streets of New York.

Despite the individual successes, most American women in the book end up living outside the communities of their childhood or early heterosexual married life. In Israel, the greater density of obser-

vant Jews seems to enable more women to slip under the radar and live as lesbians while maintaining traditional observance.

Although the conflict between patriarchal tradition and lesbian self-knowledge is painful and intractable, there are considerable spiritual gifts to be wrested from the struggle. This is beautifully illustrated in "Jerusalem Voices," where Devorah Miriam writes as an Israeli member of Orthodykes, a group with, at one point, New York and Jerusalem branches, which is mentioned frequently throughout the book. She tells her story alongside those of other Orthodykes, who appear in italicized counterpoint. Naomi Seidman's "Love in the Women's Section" explores women's spaces in Jerusalem and points to the connection between homoeroticism and gender segregation: "The eroticism of the women's spaces I had experienced at Michlalah [her Jerusalem yeshiva] and among the Orthodykes was not the aberrant product of modernity…but rather a perfectly traditional extension of the cultures from which they arose."

In addition to the personal essays, two discursive essays act as an intellectual anchor for the book. Of these, Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert's piece on how intersex people are described in the Talmud fits less easily in the volume, although some will find eye-opening reading here. Elaine Chapnik's "Women Known for These Acts" explores talmudic and biblical references to lesbians with clarity, vigorous research, and depth of feeling.

Keep Your Wives Away from Them, perfect for women just coming out or for their families, has an honorable and useful place in the evolving history of our people.

ELIZABETH C. DENLINGER *is at work on her second novel. She attended the last meeting of the New York Orthodykes and their last Sheitelstock.*

Sitting at the Sacred Table

Taking Jewish food consciousness to a different level

The Sacred Table: Creating a Jewish Food Ethic (CCAR Press, $19.95), an anthology edited by **Rabbi Mary L. Zamore**, undertakes a bold challenge: defining a new food paradigm for Reform Jews.

For over a century, the outside perception of the Reform movement's dietary philosophy has been largely defined by the infamous "*Trefa* Banquet," held in honor of the first graduating class of Hebrew Union College in 1883, with its menu of soft-shell crabs, shrimp salad and beef tenderloin followed by ice cream. The banquet set a strong precedent of deliberate kashrut non-observance for the Reform community and its leaders, but the movement has grown and shifted since then. *The Sacred Table* attempts to hold this important historical moment in the balance while acknowledging what Reform movement leader Rabbi Eric H. Yoffie calls the "re-ritualization" of the movement over the last 60 years.

Just a few decades ago, questions like "how many Reform Jews refrain from pork or shellfish in their homes?" would likely be viewed as irrelevant. Today they share space and consideration within *The Sacred Table* along with Zamore's story about her work as a *mashgiach* (kashrut supervisor) at a nearby bakery, and another by Rabbis Josh Whinston and Gersh Lazaraow about their experience learning how to *shecht* (ritually slaughter) animals for food. The tone of these articles remains true to the movement's liberal, outward-focused outlook, but their very inclusion in the conversation is nonetheless remarkable.

The Sacred Table also explores Jewish tradition's insight and wisdom on a variety of ethical food questions like combating hunger, fostering farm workers' rights, animal welfare, and environmental responsibility. "While the majority of Reform Jews do not look for a *hekhsher* (kashrut certification) on their food, it is nonetheless incumbent upon us to demand and support a higher standard of ethical behavior from the Jewish food industry," writes Rabbi Ariana Silverman. Taking that notion a step towards the practical, Rabbi Richard N. Levy wonders if a dietary practice for Reform

Jews rooted in Jewish ethical precepts like *bal taschit* (the prohibition against wasting) and *tzaar baalei chayim* (compassion towards animals) might ironically be even "more stringent" than a traditional approach to kashrut.

At the end of each of the book's 10 sections, Zamore includes a personal essay offering insight into eating as a Reform Jew in the 21st century. A professor saying *hamotzi* (the blessing over bread) before eating a fish sandwich at McDonalds; a Los Angeles rabbi expressing admiration for her vegetarian husband (and guilt over her own meat consumption); and a New Jersey rabbi striving to balance *shalom bayit* (peace in the home) and kashrut observance at her Norwegian in-law's Christmas dinner. These stories among others are a fitting testament to a movement that deeply values individual voices and lived experience.

One potential drawback of *The Sacred Table* is that in several instances, the book fails (possibly on purpose) to make a clear distinction between the traditional laws of kashrut and other Jewish dietary mandates. These blurred boundaries could potentially be confusing or misleading to a newcomer looking for a traditional definition of kosher food. Still, while *The Sacred Table* is clearly and unapologetically geared towards the Reform reader, the majority of its articles would be relevant for discussions around food and Jewish tradition across the denominational spectrum. And most importantly, this collection of articles succeeds in setting forth a proud, vibrant post-*Trefa* Banquet vision, which will hopefully inform an unfolding understanding of ethical Jewish eating.

LEAH KOENIG *is a freelance writer and author of* The Hadassah Everyday Cookbook: Daily Meals for the Contemporary Jewish Kitchen *(Rizzoli, 2011).*

Giving Birth at Home

BFF moms take up a cause

In ***Home/Birth: A Poemic*** (1913 Press, $11), **Arielle Greenberg** and **Rachel Zucker** offer a candid, thought-provoking discussion of women giving birth at home. The book is innovative in form: a conversation between the two authors in which they discuss their own birthing experiences, interwoven with homebirth safety statistics, the history of the medicalization of birth, and the ways that traumatic childbirth experiences can have enduring effects on womens' psyches. This is Greenberg and Zucker's third collaboration (they have edited two poetry anthologies), but their first time co-authoring a book. They are poets at heart, and the book has passion, righteous anger and self-discovery. They are birth activists, feminists, mothers, and Jewish best friends, talking about a subject they are drawn to personally, intellectually, and spiritually.

Many women live in fear of childbirth, not trusting that their bodies know how to birth babies.

I had a wonderful and empowering homebirth of my own with my son, and I've been struck by the fact that there are so few books about homebirth specifically. This one stands out because it comes from mothers themselves. Zucker had her first two children in hospitals. When Greenberg, her best friend, decided on a homebirth for her own first child, she invited Zucker to be present. Humbled and intrigued, Zucker enrolled in a doula (labor assistant) training program to learn the benefits of homebirth. Her eyes were opened–she not only decided to have her third baby at home, but she and Greenberg together became birth activists.

Many women choose homebirth because they want to avoid what they feel are the unnecessary medical interventions that can happen in hospitals. (While it is true that some births do require hospitalization, the majority do not, they say.) They want to give birth in a private, calming milieu. They want to have a say in what's happening to them. Greenberg and Zucker put it best: "A woman's confidence and ability to give birth and to care for her baby are enhanced or diminished by every person who gives her care, and by the environments in which she gives birth." The authors view homebirth as a feminist issue. They note that many women live in fear of childbirth, of what can go wrong, not trusting that their bodies know how to birth babies, and having no support systems who trust this either: "There's a conspiracy to keep women from knowing what their bodies can do. From seeing their power."

Greenberg and Zucker share not only their births, but also pregnancy losses, which are the most intense and intimate parts of this moving and unusual book. The authors' discussions of miscarriage and stillbirth point to the fragility of life, the intensity of motherhood, and the longing to embrace all aspects of the life cycle without fear.

WENDY WISNER *is a poet, breastfeeding counselor, and mother. She is the author of a book of poems,* Epicenter, *and a chapbook,* Another Place of Rocking.

Boston to Jerusalem and Back

Sisters take on the town

"The first time I saw Dad after he was born again was in Jerusalem, where Susan and I went to bring him home." So begins **Risa Miller**'s light and fast-paced second novel, ***My Before and After Life*** (St. Martin's, $24.99), where issues of family ties and fervent religiousness come together in the streets of Jerusalem and suburban Boston. Our narrator, Honey, is a lawyer living in the very Jewish suburb of Brookline, litigating against an Orthodox school's expansion in the neighborhood; her sister Susan owns a local seafood restaurant. Into the lives of these two stereotypically secular sisters comes the revelation: their widowed and remarried father has become a "born again" religious Jew, as they describe him,

and has moved to Jerusalem.

My Before and After Life opens with the delightful jaunt of these two cranky sisters into their father and stepmother's sun-filled Jerusalem apartment and fundamentalist life. The novel is at its brightest when the sisters wander through the Holy Land with "Dad and Evelyn," visiting the Western Wall (or "Kosel") and encountering spirituality in Safed. As Honey muses at the Western Wall: "I touched the stone—creamy smooth and worn, like sea glass. I hadn't thought for a minute that I'd feel magic jolts, and I was right." Beneath the surface—or sometimes bubbling up—lies the memory of their deceased mother, Rachel, in whose honor their father wishes to endow a religious girls' school. With a bit of a heavy hand, Miller shows us Honey's continued grief and bafflement at their father's new path, even as she is enthralled by their new surroundings.

The novel is at its strongest when the sisters are in Israel—when they return stateside, it loses some of its focus. I found it hard to sympathize with Honey's rancor at the Orthodox incursion into her neighborhood. While the character of Susan is less clearly written than Honey's, some of the novel's most pleasurable moments are the descriptions of food in Susan's very *treyf* restaurant. "I watched Mom carve up the salad with a knife and fork and eat the salad in parts: croutons first, then anchovies, then the romaine, as if a person had the power to make the parts into a whole." Miller intersperses Honey's narration with brief forays into an undetermined present time: the novel's frame is left purposely vague until the end, where the pieces come together in a surprisingly poignant conclusion.

Honey's sardonically self-aware tone brings her character alive, and any Jerusalemites or Bostonians (I am both) will appreciate the note-perfect descriptions of streets and atmosphere. *My Before and After Life* is a set piece for readers in search of a captivating book for vacation or a quiet weekend.

SARA N. S. MEIROWITZ *is a freelance writer, editor, and teacher, as well as a rabbinical student at Hebrew College in Massachusetts.*

Who Taught You to Dream?

An elegant translation brings an alternative narrative to life

In 1946, when iconic Israeli poet **Lea Goldberg** published her only novel, ***And This Is the Light [Vehu ha'or]*** (Toby Press, $24.95), the literary critics were far from impressed. Their main criticism was that the novel represented a private, very European coming-of-age story in a time of national turmoil. One of the critics even claimed that were the book not written in Hebrew he never could have guessed where and when it was written. Sixty-five years later, this novel, now translated into English, emerges as a complex and engaging work of its time.

And This Is the Light tells a moving and often somber story of a young Jewish woman who, in the summer of 1931, returns to her small hometown in Lithuania for a university vacation and falls for a friend of her father's. Nora Krieger, 20, is shattered when she discovers Albert Arin is infatuated with another, more beautiful woman. Yet her fears run deeper than questions of beauty.

Throughout the novel, she is haunted by her father's insanity, which erupted when he was tortured in World War I. "They locked him in an empty barn. And day after day, for ten straight days, they executed him, as it were.... And the man was broken, then, for the first time." Now institutionalized, he comes home to spend time with his daughter. Constantly searching her own soul for hints of madness, Nora is torn between her fear of a harmful biological heritage and her love for her father. When she learns that Arin also suffers from mental illness she is devastated, and finds solace in her writing and her studies abroad.

Nora's seemingly personal narrative introduces us to the world of a young, educated Jewish woman of the last century. Yet Goldberg ventures a step further when she decides to locate a young female protagonist at the center of this debut novel at the height of the national turbulence in Palestine. While her lit-

erary peers of the so-called Palmach generation were focused on creating in their works the image of the *Sabra*—the new anti-diasporic Jewish man, a son of the land—Goldberg's heroine learns to grapple with her past rather than erase it: "Who taught you to dream the dream of your future, with a tremble, to pronounce the name of a little land on the shores of the Mediterranean, if not this town and its Jews?" By reiterating the tragic consequences of trying to erase the past, Goldberg ultimately subverts the Zionist foundation of rebirth. As Nili Scharf Gold points out in her introduction, "the novel's seeming uncertainty that Zionism would succeed might have contributed to its cold reception."

For today's reader, *And This is the Light* is a bittersweet yet empowering coming-of-age story. Underscored by Goldberg's own life story, this alternative biography of Jewish identity, intellectual quest, and emotional triumph is still very much a pertinent literary narrative. At last, Barbara Harshav's elegant translation of Goldberg's lyrical prose brings into English one of Israel's most beloved poets and, in recent years, a prose writer to be admired too.

HADAR MAKOV-HASSON *received her Ph.D. in Hebrew Literature from New York University. She runs the Israeli department at The Deborah Harris Agency.*

European History

Two novels with epistolary power

"Letters mingle souls," wrote the poet John Donne. In the novels ***Russian Winter*** by **Daphne Kalotay** (Harper Collins, $25.99) and ***Far to Go*** by **Alison Pick** (Harper Perennial, $14.99), letters play a pivotal role. The letters in *Russian Winter* are written by murdered Soviet poet Viktor Elsin. Or at least that's the contention of Grigori Solodin, a shy, bookish professor of Russian. Grigori has translated the letters, along with Elsin's poetry, but their origin remains elusive for they bear neither salutation nor signature. He suspects they were written to Elsin's wife, Nina Revskaya, a Bolshoi ballerina. Grigori's interest in the letters—and in Nina herself, whom he has attempted to contact—is more than academic, for he suspects that the letters are the key to finding the biological parents who gave him to his adoptive family.

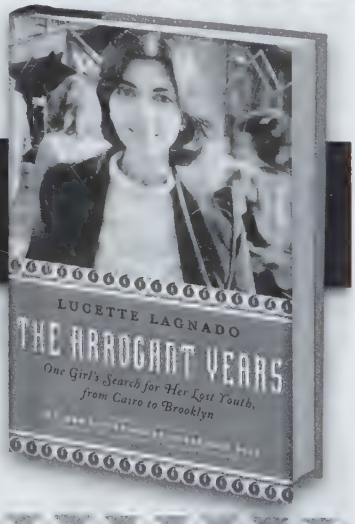
Grigori's story is interwoven with that of Nina herself, now in her eighties, as she prepares to auction off her impressive jewelry collection. The novel moves back and forth from Nina's youth in Soviet Russia to present-day Boston. Grigori secretly thinks that Nina is his biological mother, and has, along with the letters, an exquisite amber necklace that he feels is another link in the chain that binds them. Initially, Nina rebuffs Grigori's overtures. But then she recalls her long-dead husband, and other characters as well: his friend Gersh, a brilliant Jewish composer singled out for persecution; her friend Vera, forced to relocate with her grandmother after her parents were denounced and sent away. The result is a suspenseful, elegant novel whose grace matches that of the ballerina whose story lies at its heart.

In *Far from Home*, Canadian author Alison Pick uses letters as lyrical punctuation or small poetic digressions. The story, set on the eve of the German invasion of Czechoslovakia, is narrated by Marta, nanny to four-year old Pepik. Pepik's parents, Anneliese and Pavel Bauer, are assimilated Jews; he is a prosperous factory owner and she his pampered wife. Each reacts differently to the German threat. Pavel wants to reconnect with his Jewish heritage; Anneliese wants to escape. When Pavel resists, Annelise takes Pepik to be baptized by a local priest.

Early in the novel, Pavel tells Marta about his brother, brutally knocked to the street by a gang of Nazi thugs and forced to scrub the pavement as they taunt him. When he asks for water, they make him drink slop from the pail, glass shards and all. They then beat him with the tailpipe of his own car, and leave him for dead. Sitting in the Bauer's comfortable parlor, Marta can barely believe, let alone comprehend,

From the bestselling author of *THE MAN IN THE WHITE SHARKSKIN SUIT,*
Winner of the Sami Rohr Prize for Jewish Literature

LUCETTE LAGNADO | THE ARROGANT YEARS
One Girl's Search for Her Lost Youth, from Cairo to Brooklyn



"Tender and heartfelt . . . [Lagnado] is a gifted storyteller who spins ordinary family experiences into enchanting fairy tales."
—*KIRKUS REVIEWS*

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what she hears until, startled by the sound of a gunshot, she and Pavel rush to the window. The town square is filled with soldiers. "A young girl cried openly as she watched a uniformed back retreat across the square. Her man going off to fight. She held a single rose in her hand, the petals pointed toward the ground like a magic wand that had lost its power."

Pick limns the ensuing events with economy and precision. Letters from Pavel and others are scattered throughout, like shredded bits of a map that will ultimately guide the reader home. Harrowing and unrelenting, *Far to Go* offers a fresh lens through which to view a familiar story.

YONA ZELDIS MCDONOUGH *is Lilith's fiction editor. Her fourth novel,* A Wedding In Great Neck, *is due out from New American Library in October 2012.*

Time and Tide

Vibrant new poetry collections

Every woman confronts the idea of age in her own way, by counting the years that breed wisdom, or acknowledging the history passed down from her foremothers. **Linda Pastan**'s new collection, *Traveling Light* (W.W. Norton, $24.95), seeks to examine the lightness of aging and the weight of the experiences we keep with us. Many of her poems are still-life capsules or associative moments, often whimsical, as Pastan tries to redefine herself and examine her place in life. In "Any Woman," she boldly claims, "Age has nothing to do with me." Still, there's a longing to relive or reverse time, if only for the pleasure of re-experiencing everyday moments. These poems want to move against time but also have the capacity to enjoy being within it, if only to bake bread, share it with family, compose a poem. "In the end," Pastan writes, "we are no more than our own stories."

Rachel Barenblat's *70 faces: Torah Poems* (Phoenicia Publishing, $13.95) also wrestles with the question of memory but from within the collective traditions of the Torah. The title of the project comes from a passage of Bemidbar Rabbah, "There are seventy faces to Torah: Turn it and turn it, for everything is in it." Barenblat turns through the old characters and narratives of the Torah as though she is holding a prism in light: her modes are distinctly personal and shine with her understanding of life as a woman, rabbi, wife and mother. She places herself in the predominately male tradition of *midrash* (exegetical stories that seek to understand scripture), and she asserts her own voice in this rich lineage. What unfolds is a set of poems, one for each Torah portion, that speaks to body, ritual, complex familial relationships, and the very act of writing. In "God and I," Barenblat imagines the difficult interior landscapes of the forefathers, including the act of Isaac's near-sacrifice that marks the Jewish faith. In another poem, she uses the commandment that a man must wear tefillin to engage in a discussion of the body: "If my body is mine / my vows are binding. / The tefillin on my arm, / my silver wedding ring."

Merle Feld, in *Finding Words* (URJ Press, $14.95), churns through memory and language, how we communicate, and what's at stake in our relationships. With age, the voice develops a different approach to language: "Now at 57 I feel a need / to confess to my dearest / women friends the sins / of long gone days and minutes." Confessional and elegiac modes take precedence in this collection.

Adrienne Rich's poetry and criticism span 60 years. Her newest collection, *Tonight No Poetry Will Serve* (W.W. Norton, $24.95) examines with poise and vision our service or servitude to language, to authority, under the weight of our cultural and political history. Alongside considerations of slavery and class, Rich's poems cut through the polyphonic soundscape with an awareness of gender and femininity. "Winterface" is divided into two sections, "hers" and "his," but maintains its connection to something profoundly universal. This latest collection from Rich affirms her place as a witness to our times. As she writes in "Powers of Recuperation," "A woman of the citizen party… / is writing history backward."

MARINA BLITSHTEYN *is a poet and writing instructor at Columbia University. Her poetry chapbook,* Russian for Lovers, *was published by Argos Books in 2011.*

HAPPENING

Jews on Vinyl

Once-loved and sometimes-forgotten audio gems tell a vibrant tale of how Jewish culture became mainstream American culture. In an experiential exhibition visitors are transported to the days of turntables in recreated mid-20th century living rooms while listening to the sounds of an earlier era—(Barbara) "Streisand Superman," comedian Patsy Abbott's "Yiddish Songs Mama Never Taught Me," "Shalom: The Barry Sisters," and Shoshana Damari's "Haifa in Hi-Fi." Based on the 2008 book *And You Shall Know Us by the Trail of Our Vinyl: The Jewish Past as Told by the Records We Have Loved and Lost* by Roger Bennett and Josh Kun, who guest-curated this exhibition organized by the Contemporary Jewish Museum in San Francisco, it's at Yeshiva University Museum in NYC. *yumuseum.org*

Mameloshn—How Yiddish Made a Home in Melbourne

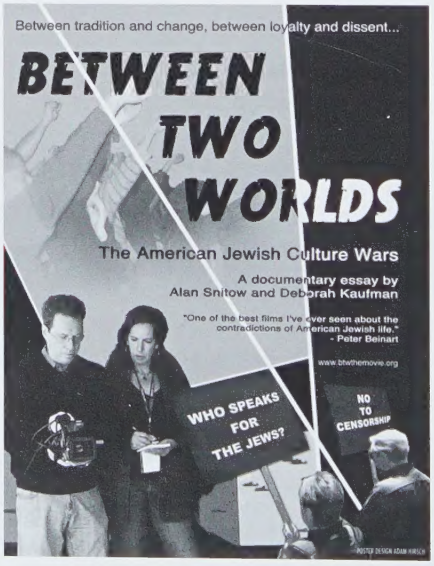
A new exhibit showcases the complexities, controversy, theatre, music and politics of this Australian Yiddish community, and the lasting contribution of a language and culture woven into what is now multicultural Melbourne. Curated by Anna Epstein, it documents the journey of Eastern European Jews who came here to recreate their lives. Through February 2012 at The Jewish Museum of Australia in Victoria. *jewishmuseum.com.au*

Pearls of Wisdom: End the Violence

Kim Abeles has drawn on her own history as a survivor of domestic violence to design a transformative art-making installation project, working with survivors and community members to recast memories of domestic pain into iridescent objects. Like pearls, these deeply personal works were formed in response to a harmful irritant. Accompanying the "pearls of wisdom" are the words, advice and images from hundreds of participants. Organized by A Window Between Worlds, a national nonprofit using art to end domestic violence. Admission free. September 13, 2011–February 26, 2012. *skirball.org/exhibitions/pearls-of-wisdom*

Between Two Worlds

This documentary asks who gets to decide what being Jewish is and isn't, and who is entitled to speak for a polarized Jewish community. In a world where "young Jews choose new hybrid and reinvented Jewish identities despite the outcry of traditionalists," the film explores in a passionate and personal way how the paths to inclusion in the Jewish community are narrowing. Filmmakers Deborah Kaufman, (founder and director for 13 years of the San Francisco Jewish Film Festival) and Alan Snitow share their families' poignant stories in this provocative film. *btwthemovie.org*


Between tradition and change, between loyalty and dissent...
BETWEEN TWO WORLDS
The American Jewish Culture Wars
A documentary essay by
Alan Snitow and Deborah Kaufman
"One of the best films I've ever seen about the contradictions of American Jewish life."
- Peter Beinart
www.btwthemovie.org
WHO SPEAKS FOR THE JEWS?
NO TO CENSORSHIP

Gender, Dress and Religion

Clothing is often a means of self expression for women, a source of pleasure and anxiety, an indicator of repression or liberation, a canvas for religious and political control. It can set norms for fitting in and breaking out, signify conformity to national, religious and cultural expectations or defiance of them. These are some of the topics that will be explored at "What to Wear: Women, Clothing, Religion," an all day conference at the Jewish Theological Seminary in NYC. It's intended for women (and interested men), clergy of diverse religious traditions, academics and laypersons. There will be programming for teens, intergenerational presentations, and a free public lecture by Jenna Weissman Joselit, "In Good Taste: American Jews and the Pursuit of Acceptance," in the evening. March 11, 2012. *jtsa.org*

What Jews Look Like

How can communities ensure the inclusion of individuals of varying ethnic, cultural, and racial backgrounds, gender, sexual orientation and degrees of religious observance? A conference to explore diversity will be keynoted by The Honorable Ruth Messinger. Rabbi Linda Henry Goodman of the Union Temple of Brooklyn and Lacey Schwartz, National Outreach Director of Be'chol Lashon, will respond. Nancy Kaufman, CEO of National Council of Jewish Women, Rabbi Heidi Hoover and Dr. Eva Fogelman will lead discussion groups. Offered by The Jewish Women's Resource Center Steering Committee of the NCJW New York Section, Sunday, December 11, 2011, at NCJW New York Section. *ncjw.org*

Museum on the Seam

The not-yet-well-enough-known Jerusalem museum, a socio-political contemporary art museum founded in 2005, is situated in a building which, between 1948 and 1967, served as an Israeli army outpost on the border between Israel and Jordan; it stood alongside the Mandelbaum Gate that connected the divided city. The current exhibit, about Islam and the West, includes works by Israeli and international artists—and invites viewers to "walk between struggles for honor, faith, and prestige weighted down by suspicion, and to look closely at the maze of hostility that led two civilizations to an existential struggle for power and control of the world of tomorrow." *mots.org.il*

Special Needs B'nai Mitzvah

On Eagles' Wings offers innovative support for special needs children approaching their b'nai mitzvah to help them experience a joyous and memorable rite of passage. Created by Rabbi Margot Stein, this website offers resources for educators and parents, including an ask-the rabbi corner for help with writing *divrei Torah*, mp3s of key prayers, Hebrew language resources, and a place to connect with other families, and to be "cheered on." *Booktobimah.com*

A Jewish Library in Vilnius

Its motto is "The tent of Jewish life and culture is large enough to have something for everyone." The first Jewish library in Lithuania since 1943 was recently established to celebrate culture created by Jews and opens November 2011. *VilniusJewishLibrary.org*

Out of Kippot

Women's "caps and hats with a Jewish twist... portable and revolutionary" are each unique and handmade in a studio in Munich, Germany. In the best tradition of recycling, they are sewn from remnants of couture design. Hannes Hein came up with the idea for this "Fashion Against antiSemitism" project as one small way to do something about an increase in neo-Nazi advertising she noticed in Dresden over the last 15 years. Ten percent of proceeds are donated to the Friends of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews in Berlin. One kippah, the "hat ahead memory" shown here, has a CD which can store memories. *ook-fashion.com*

COURTESY OF ISRAMERICA

Isramerica

Sivan Hadari's one-woman show "The Emancipation of the Sassy Jewish Woman" was recently filmed for a documentary about Israeli artists in New York. She runs the nonprofit Isramerica, comprised of emerging Israeli and Jewish-American actors, dancers, singers, comedians, playwrights, directors, filmmakers and visual artists who celebrate their Jewish roots through art and spread a positive image of Israel to audiences of Jews and non-Jews alike.

Many have been featured on Broadway and off, on Comedy Central, MTV and HBO, as well as in music and comedy venues all over New York. They produce a number of events throughout the year including holiday gatherings, film screenings, play festivals, private parties and performances. *Isramerica.com*

—compiled by Naomi Danis

For events and projects taking place between issues of Lilith, follow Lilith on Facebook and Twitter, check out *Lilith.org, and sign up for Lilith's free e-mail newsletter.* Send suggestions for this section to *info@Lilith.org*.

Emma Lazarus: Poet of Exiles

She wrote the poem "The New Colossus," which graces the Statue of Liberty (about to celebrate its 125th anniversary). Her words also express the noble promise of United States policy: "Give me your tired...yearning to breathe free." A major museum exhibition brings insights into the world of Emma Lazarus—writer, advocate and fourth-generation Jewish American, exploring her Sephardic background, her family's participation in American life and her work for Jewish causes. A companion website includes commentary and glimpses onto Emma's New York, with images and artifacts. A mobile walking tour of Emma Lazarus's New York, narrated by actress Julianna Margulies, includes a reading of "The New Colossus" by actress Meryl Streep. The tour visits 19 historic sites that shaped Emma Lazarus's experience and legacy. At the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York. *www.mjhnyc.org/emma*

EMMA LAZARUS, C. 1866. COURTESY ANTOINETTE GEVELIN HOAR

COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

THE 500-YEAR-OLD RABBI

Barbara Aiello Rescues Lost Worlds

INTERVIEW BY SUSAN SCHNUR

So it's not like every rabbi has olive orchards in Calabria, Italy.

My family and four other Jewish families founded Serrastretta, this isolated mountain village in Italy's instep, in the 16th century. My house is 430 years old, but our olive trees are babies—the oldest is only 800. The Inquisition chased my family from Toledo [Spain] to Portugal, to Gibraltar, to Morocco, to Sicily, and finally way up here. People don't realize that Ferdinand and Isabella controlled a third of the way up Italy's boot. A relative of mine, a blacksmith, Federico Ajello, was jailed for 12 years for "judaizing" in Palermo in the 1520s and his "document of release" explains that he "can be harassed as a Jew in the marketplace and near his home, but not on the job"—the town really needed a blacksmith!

I have bound copies of Inquisition records which were organized village by village, and since Italians, unlike Americans, stay in their hometowns, I know all the surnames of the *anusim*, all the Jews forced to convert around here. I also have our family Bible; it's in tatters, you can imagine, but it lists all our relatives from 1400 on.

But you were brought up mostly in Pittsburgh.

Yes. We were a community of refugees from Greece, Turkey, Spain, Portugal, Italy. About 30 families, all traumatized. One of my eight aunts could never walk farther than three blocks from her house. My mother left Sicily 10 days before the Jews were deported to Dachau. My father became a partisan in the Resistance, then, with the U.S. Army, liberated Buchenwald. Pittsburgh felt like Serrastretta to us—ethnic neighborhoods nestled deep in valleys, the same topography. I didn't know there were Ashkenazim in Pittsburgh until I was in my teens.

I take it you speak Ladino.

My first language is Italian, but my parents spoke Ladino to each other. So, yes, if you're talking about sex or money, I'm fluent in Ladino.

Can we go back to the olives?

My father and I returned to our house in Serrastretta every August and September to harvest them with our relatives, putting out bright orange nets. Our family's olive press is renowned, very intricate. For 500 years it has pressed the finest clear green oil, a prized commodity. The synagogue I founded in 2006 is called *Sinagoga Ner Tamid del Sud*—"Eternal Light"—and we make "first press" oil for the ner tamid exactly as it says in Leviticus 24:2 and the end of Exodus 27. "Clear oil of beaten olives to burn from evening to morning...for all time, throughout the ages." Olive trees at this high altitude are like gnarled bushes, very close together, their trunks twisted and intertwined. When I look at them I see ancient braided challahs.

Do you have extended family in Italy?

Seventy cousins, including two priests and a nun. And my husband Enrico's family; he's from Calabria, too, and can trace his lineage to Spinoza—can you imagine? I split my time between the U.S. and Italy, but I am always here in Serrastretta for May, June and July. And we'll retire here.

There's such poetry in your life.

Because of the *beshertness* of it, perhaps. That I'm fulfilling a promise I made to my father when I had no idea how I would do it. Before the war, he didn't care about Judaism. But after he saw 900 young Jews dead and dying at Buchenwald, he said to me, "You must do something for Jewish children. You didn't have a chance to grow up with any of these people's children, your generation." I became a rabbi at 51; our synagogue is truly beautiful, with gates and a *Magen David* and grape arbor. We have Shabbat services Friday evenings. And I'm the Director of the Italian Jewish Cultural Center of Calabria. I welcome all Jews, gays and lesbians, interfaith families—all of these will lead to the next generation, to children. And I do live in another time, another century. I come from the kabbalists writing in the caves of Spain, talking about the reincarnation of souls.

You've uncovered many Jews who didn't know they were Jewish.

People will tell me they "feel" they are Jews. So I ask, "Do you take the blood spot out of eggs, sweep to the center of the floor, eat hard-boiled eggs arranged in the shape of a Star of David after a burial?" "Yes! Yes!" I know the Jewish surnames in this region—Vitale, Vita, Aiello, Taverna. I teach "conversion" classes, but they are really a *return* to a Judaism that was stolen from them 500 years ago. The Hebrew word "*ohnes*" (as in *anusim*) means "rape."

And you've performed the first bat mitzvahs in all of Italy.

I've done five. I call these girls my Five Books of Miriam. I work with *anusim* in Europe, in America. Then these kids come up the mountains in these little vans to read from the Torah. "Where are we going?" they say. "It's so isolated. Does anyone live here?" "How do you think we survived?" I tell them. "We looked for the most isolated place." ■

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